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This valuable reference book not only presents 500 additional concise synopses and essay-reviews with critiques of important works from many ages, but also features an over-all index for all four series, thus making the whole set much easier to use. The works covered here range from Xenophon and Lucian to John Updike and William Golding. American, English, European, and other fiction and drama are well represented, and there is stress on poetry and nonfiction so that all categories are now admirably and more or less equally represented in the four volumes. Virtually every piece of literature studied in high-school and college literature courses is treated in the four books. Two thousand ten works by 973 known and 28 anonymous authors are included.

As always, Frank N. Magill as general editor has had the valuable assistance of top-flight professors in colleges and universities throughout the country. All entries have been checked and rechecked for accuracy, clarity,

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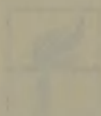
MASTERPIECES OF WORLD LITERATURE
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Fourth Series

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Frank N. Magill

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
Dorothy Seaman and others



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PREFACE

WHEN the Third Series of MASTERPLOTS appeared in 1960, the editors and staff believed that the series was complete. 1,510 outstanding books from world literature had been summarized or reviewed including, in addition to novels and plays, works in the fields of poetry, philosophy, history, and biography. However, the poetry and nonfiction essays of the Third Series, a new development in the project, were accorded such wide acceptance that an enlargement of these categories seemed called for. Thus we tentatively began a Fourth Series, to be devoted largely to poetry and nonfiction.

The deeper we delved into the possibilities, the more we began to realize that it would be no problem at all to find five hundred additional representative works to include in Series Four. Indeed, the abundance of fine literature we had not previously covered was really surprising. Not yet included were Andrić and Barth, Bellow and Cheever, Hawkes, Morris, and Updike. What about Durrell's *ALEXANDRIA QUARTET*, Golding's *LORD OF THE FLIES*, and Powell's *A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME*? And those British authors C. P. Snow, J. R. R. Tolkien, and T. R. White, not to mention Ivy Compton-Burnett, Iris Murdoch, and Muriel Spark? What about *PALE FIRE*, *DR. ZHIVAGO*, or young Günter Grass? And speaking of fiction, we had not covered the short stories of Hemingway, Lawrence, Forster, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, and numerous others.

This series, however, was to be devoted mainly to poetry and nonfiction so we had to move along, though we did find room for some drama, including *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?*, *LOOK BACK IN ANGER*, and *THE CARETAKER*.

Poetry accounts for about one-third of all the material in this new series, with articles on the works of Aiken and Cummings, Dryden and Jonson; Roethke, Stevens, and Williams; Moore, Wylie, Wordsworth, and Lowell—Robert as well as James Russell—and even the seventeenth century Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Altogether there are 115 articles on "The Poetry of . . ." in addition to studies on the lyric poetry of Byron, Milton, Spenser, and articles on specific works such as *IL FILOSTRATO*, *MEN AND WOMEN*, *ESSAY ON MAN*, *PERSONAE*, *THE BRONZE HORSEMAN*, *CHICAGO POEMS*, *THE PRINCESS*, *LE LAIS*, *ECLOGUES*, and *THE LAY OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN*, to mention only a few.

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The nonfiction range is also broad. There are discussions of the essays of Beerbohm, Chesterton, Hazlitt, Huxley, and Pound, and the letters of Emily Dickinson, Scott Fitzgerald, Madame de Sévigné, Frost, Wolfe, and Pliny, among others. Interesting journals by Boswell, Thoreau, Dostoevski, Gide, Dorothy Wordsworth, the Goncourts, and Lewis and Clark are also included. Adding breadth are discussions of individual works such as Van Wyck Brooks' *AMERICA'S COMING-OF-AGE*, Johan Huizinga's *THE WANING OF THE MIDDLE AGES*, Alexis de Tocqueville's *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*, John Ruskin's *THE STONES OF VENICE*, George Trevelyan's *ENGLAND UNDER THE STUARTS*, and *THE RISE OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION* by the Beards. Works of special literary interest include Berdyaev's *DOSTOEVSKY*, Dryden's *AN ESSAY ON DRAMATIC POESY*, Eliot's *DANTE*, Goethe's *POETRY AND TRUTH FROM MY OWN LIFE*, Hawthorne's two Notebooks, Johnson's *PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE* and his *LIVES OF THE POETS*, and Richards' *PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM*.

One aspect of a literary survey often overlooked is the ever-expanding nature of the body of literature. The creative process is a continuum without seasons, and any year produces many worth-while volumes that eventually take their place alongside the standards from earlier times. Much of the work in the Fourth Series was not even in being when the First Series appeared in 1949. This concept had much to do with our inaugurating an Annual Volume starting in 1954, in which we began an attempt to record objective evaluations of one hundred outstanding new books published in the United States each year. In the intervening years we have published essay-reviews of thirteen hundred books covering nonfiction and poetry as well as drama and fiction.

A surprising number of these titles have been selected for inclusion in the Fourth Series. For example, Marguerite Yourcenar's *HADRIAN'S MEMOIRS*, a beautifully styled presentation of the life and deeds of the grave, serene pagan emperor whose imprint on the Roman world is still in evidence, appeared in the 1954 Annual. Yukio Mishima's *THE SOUND OF WAVES*, from the 1957 Annual, brought to American readers a sensitive story of two present-day young lovers thwarted by Japanese tradition. The same volume included a book called *PROFILES IN COURAGE*, whose author was then a mere U.S. Senator.

Among the novels of more than passing interest in the 1958 Annual were John Cheever's *THE WAPSHOT CHRONICLE* and the first volume of Lawrence Durrell's *ALEXANDRIA QUARTET*, which focuses on Justine. This Annual also took note of England's "Angry Young Men" by including John Osborne's *LOOK BACK IN ANGER*. The most discussed novel in the 1959 Annual was Boris Pasternak's *DOCTOR ZHIVAGO*. Perhaps the most important

PREFACE

work of that year from the standpoint of American literary scholarship was *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, which had been preceded three years earlier by a three-volume edition of her complete poems, edited by Thomas H. Johnson. The 1960 Annual was noteworthy in that it carried the word announcing the violent end of Flem Snopes. The 1963 volume included Katherine Anne Porter's long-awaited *SHIP OF FOOLS* along with a number of other outstanding works of fiction. The promising young German writer Günter Grass was represented for the first time in the 1964 Annual with two novels, *THE TIN DRUM*, his first, and *CAT AND MOUSE*.

All the Annual titles mentioned above have been included in the Fourth Series and are now a permanent part of the overall project. Although a few titles from the most recent years are included, the staff, feeling uncertain of the objectivity of its appraisals, became more cautious in designating titles for inclusion as we approached our own point in time.

Printed in the Fourth Series is a Cumulative Author Index which lists every author and title represented in the four series. There are 220 new authors and 500 new titles in the Fourth Series, bringing the total number of authors in the entire project to 973 plus 35 "Unknowns." The number of titles comes to a total of 2,010. In the cumulative index titles new to the series—and their authors—are accompanied by an asterisk, a procedure which, in effect, furnishes the reader with an index for Series Four only, as well as the cumulative index. In this series, as in the other three, certain authors and titles that may seem obscure to some observers are included for historical reasons.

With the publication of the Fourth Series this project, begun more than twenty years ago, is completed. Although annual volumes will continue to provide an updating service, no Fifth Series is contemplated for the future. As usual, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the staff members, some of whom have been active since the very beginning of the project. The outstanding contributions of these dedicated individuals provide the base on which the entire series rests.

Also, we acknowledge with thanks the permissions granted by certain publishers and agents for our use of various works still in copyright. Credit lines and copyright notices appear as footnotes accompanying titles, where appropriate.

Although the future is all one has left, the average person is likely to desert the new wave on occasion, and look back with fondness on something which has occupied the past twenty years of his life. I am normal in that respect.

FRANK N. MAGILL

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THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH

Type of work: Novel

Author: Saul Bellow (1915-)

Time: c. 1920-1950

Locale: Principally Chicago

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

AUGIE MARCH, the narrator and protagonist

SIMON MARCH, Augie's older brother

CHARLOTTE MAGNUS, Simon's wife

GEORGIE MARCH, Augie's feeble-minded younger brother

WILLIAM EINHORN, Augie's friend and employer

MRS. RENLING, a woman who wants to adopt Augie

THEA FENCHEL, Augie's sometime mistress

STELLA CHESNEY, Augie's wife

Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*, which won him his first National Book Award for fiction, is a novel which quickly impresses the reader that he must be ready to read and understand the book at several levels, each of these being meaningful in itself and yet unmistakably intertwined with the others.

At the simplest and most obvious level of reading, the novel is in the picaresque tradition, telling the adventures, often comic, of a rascal born out of wedlock to a charwoman, reared in the poverty of a down-at-heels Chicago neighborhood, and early addicted to taking life as it comes. Augie March the adult, thus seen, is a ne'er-do-well hanger-on to people of wealth and, at times, a thief, even a would-be smuggler. As a child of poverty he learned from the adults about him and from his experience that a ready lie told with a glib tongue and an air of innocence is often profitable. Growing older, he learned that many women are of easy virtue and hold the same loose reins on their personal morality as Augie himself. Love of a kind and easy money seem, at this level, to be Augie's goals in life.

While he may dream of becoming a teacher, even take a few courses at the University of Chicago and read widely in an informal way, Augie stays on the fringes of the postwar black market, where he finds the easy money he needs to live in what he regards as style.

When viewed at the literal level, *The Adventures of Augie March*, like Bellow's earlier fiction, is largely in the naturalistic tradition. In his choice of setting, in his pessimistic choices of detail and character, in his use of a wealth of detail, and in the implicit determinism apparent in the careers of Augie March, his relatives, and his friends, one notes similarities to the fiction of Zola, Norris, Dreiser, and other giants of the naturalistic tradition in literature. One notes also a kinship with the novels of Nelson Algren and James T. Farrell. At times Augie March seems little more than a Jewish boy from Chicago's Northwest Side who is one part Farrell's Studs Lonigan and one part the same author's Danny O'Neill, from Chicago's South Side Irish neighborhood. With Farrell's characters, Augie March shares immigrant back-

ground, a loss of meaning in life, degrading poverty, and a grossly hedonistic view of life.

But unlike many naturalistic novelists, Saul Bellow seeks meaning in facts; he is not confined to the principle that the novelist is simply an objective, amoral reporter of life as he finds it, a recorder of life among the lowly, the immoral, the poverty-stricken. Nor does he permit his character Augie March to be merely a creature of environment, molded by forces outside himself, or within himself, over which he has no control. *The Adventures of Augie March* can be read at a deeper level than environmental determinism. Augie is capable of intellectual activity of a relatively high order, of knowing what he is struggling with and struggling for. Throughout his life he learns that other people want to make him over. Grandma Lausch, an elderly Russian-Jewess of fallen fortunes who lives with the Marches, tries to form the boy, and he rebels. Later Mr. and Mrs. Renling, well-to-do shopkeepers in a fashionable Chicago suburb and Augie's employers, want to make him over, even adopt him, but he rebels. Augie's brother Simon, who achieves wealth and considerable respectability, tries to make a new man of Augie and finds Augie rebellious. Various women in Augie's life, including Thea Fenchel, Augie's erstwhile mistress (whom he follows to Mexico to hunt iguanas with an eagle), try to recast Augie's nature. They, too, fail, for above all Augie refuses to be molded into someone else's image of what he ought to be.

What does Augie want to be, that he refuses to be cast in any mold suggested by the people about him? He wants to become something, for he is always searching—but he never seriously accepts any goal. He wants always to be independent in act and spirit, and some sort of independence he does achieve, empty though it is. He wants to be someone, to achieve all of which he is capable, but he never finds a specific goal or pattern. By refusing to commit himself to anything

he ends up accomplishing virtually nothing. It is a sad fact of his existence that he comes to be a bit envious of his mentally deficient brother Georgie, who has mastered some of the elements of shoe-repairing. Saul Bellow seems to be saying through Augie that it is possible to have a fate without a function, but as he presents the character the result is, ironically, to show that without a function no one, including Augie March, can have a fate. Whether or not the irony is intentional, the reader cannot be sure.

Another view of the novel that is both logical and fruitful is to regard it at the level of social comment. Most remarkable at this level is the section of American society in which Augie March moves. Augie is a Jew; that fact is literally beaten into him by neighborhood toughs, including those among the Gentiles he thought his friends, while he is a child. As he grows up, takes jobs, finds friends and confidants, seeks out women to love, Augie moves almost always in the company of Jews. The respectability toward which he is pushed is always the respectability of the Jewish middle classes, particularly that of the Jews who have lost their religion and turned to worshipping the quick success in moneymaking which is mirrored in their passion for fleshy women, flashy cars, and too much rich food. While in one sense Bellow's novel is a novel of an adolescent discovering the world, it is a restricted world in which Augie makes his discoveries. He seems never to understand the vast fabric of American culture which lies about him. If his is a sociological tragedy, and many readers will find it so, it is not an American tragedy in the broad sense. Rather it is the tragedy of a Jewish child who sees only the materialism of Jews who have forsaken their rich tradition and found nothing to replace it.

While some readers will most readily grasp the tragic elements in *The Adventures of Augie March*, others will grasp more readily the comic aspects. Following as it does in some ways the picaresque

tradition, the novel is bound to have a wide strain of the comic. Neither Augie nor his creator take some of the character's deviations from conventional standards of conduct very seriously. Augie bounds in and out of crime and sin with scarcely a backward glance. If his loves seem empty, his women unfaithful, Augie accepts the results with comic aplomb. If to be unheroic, to give in with little or no struggle, to be weak and ineffectual is comic (and thus it has long been viewed), Augie is a comic protagonist and the novel a comic work. But the comic spirit is also used traditionally for serious, often satiric, purpose. It is here that the reader well may be puzzled. While the comic elements are undeniably in the novel, adding to the richness of its texture, one wonders at their purpose. The novel seems at times to be offering satiric comment on the foibles of mankind, but such comment seems alien, if not contradictory, in the framework of Bellow's work, unless it be there to show that the creator of Augie March shares the character's belief in the irrational nature of man, society, and the universe.

Indeed, Augie seems at times to be a symbol of the irrational; this symbolic value is mirrored by the eagle which

Augie and Thea Fenchel train to hunt. The young bald eagle, fierce in appearance, proved to be an apt pupil; he seemed marvelously equipped, with powerful wings, beak, and claws, to be an instrument of destruction, and he learned well how to attack a piece of meat tendered by his trainers. But when a live creature, even a tiny lizard, put up resistance, he turned away from the attack; he refused to do what he was capable of doing, defying his very nature. Like the eagle, Augie March failed, too. Young, handsome, charming, and intelligent, Augie refuses to face life, always seeing it as something someone else wants him to do. When life hit back at him, Augie turned away from what he was prepared to do. He strikes the reader as being left without purpose, like the eagle, to exist, to look at, and to be fed. That the character sees this as "living" is perhaps the greatest irony of all. Augie has become an anti-hero; he is not so much comic as pathetic. As narrator he realizes, however vaguely, that while he has denied the traditional goals which people have held up for him, he has not failed to find a goal for himself which he can regard as worth while. In trying to live he has found little but a meaningless existence.

AESTHETIC

Type of work: Aesthetic philosophy and history

Author: Benedetto Croce (1866-1952)

First published: 1902

Benedetto Croce's *Aesthetic: As Science of Expression and General Linguistic* is important because he was the first to expound the theory of Organic Unity, that form and content are one. Working from this principle and its corollaries, Croce evolved a conception of art and the means by which one could judge works of art of any time or place according to a consistent standard. He held that man's activities are intelligible only as an effort to realize ideals—beauty, truth,

ethics—and that history is the record of human intelligence building up civilization in all forms. Concrete reality, he stated, can only be reached through perception of the individual fact or historical knowledge. He saw the goal of philosophy as providing us with an understanding of history, of the spirit of man. But he felt every philosophy to be final only for the present problem which it solved, not for the problems that would inevitably arise afterwards. As a result he re-

jected all closed systems of philosophy and maintained the nondefinitive nature of philosophy.

The *Aesthetic* is divided into two parts: the *Theory of Aesthetic* and the *History of Aesthetic*. Croce revised this work several times, enlarging and changing it according to the development of his thought. In the first part he developed his theory of art as pure intuition, as a cognitive process concerned with the specific as differentiated from the universal. This cognitive activity is a spiritual activity which produces an image. This image is a complete unit—a finished painting, an entire novel—which brings together many details into a complex pattern. Precisely what this unit is, what processes man goes through in order to produce, reproduce, and evaluate it, and its relationship with other of man's mental processes are the problems that Croce attempts to solve in his *Theory of Aesthetic*.

Man, said Croce, is free, conscious, and creative, and his creative activity is a spiritual activity that results in an intuition, an image, of the real and the possible. This image is a mental picture of something quite specific and concrete, either an object or a person; thus, images furnish the material for all art. The details of a novel, for instance, its characters and descriptions, are individual details; all of these taken together form the image. This intuition is equal to but quite independent of intellectual knowledge, which is concerned with universal concepts.

A true intuition is expression; a fully formed artistic image is a verbalized image. That which is not expressed is not intuition but merely sensation or formless matter. The spirit can never apprehend this formless matter until it has given it form; then it becomes objectified and is a true intuition. Thus form and content become one. If one cannot express an idea, one does not possess it. As Michelangelo said, "One paints, not with the hands, but with the brain."

The difference in intuitive knowledge between that of the genius and that of the average man lies in scope, not in kind. If this were not so, art could never reveal us to ourselves. For recognition to occur, there must be identity of nature between the artist's imagination and ours. For this reason, also, there can be no supermen because the super-race concept is based on a difference in kind and not simply in scope.

The artistic genius is always conscious—otherwise it would be blind mechanism—and, although its expression is of emotion, of a state of mind and therefore always lyrical, it is wrong to say that only intellectual cognition is knowledge. Intuition is knowledge; the aesthetic fact is form and does not belong to mere feeling or psychic matter. Croce saw every expression as a single expression: spiritual activity fused all impressions into an organic whole; thus Croce proclaimed the indivisibility of the work of art. Not only is art a cognitive activity, but it liberates and purifies. By objectifying his impressions, the artist frees himself from them, and makes himself their superior.

The relationship between intuitive knowledge, or expression, and intellectual knowledge, or concept, is of two parts: first, expression, second, concept; that is, knowledge by means of the imagination or by the intellect; knowledge of the individual or of the universal; of individual things or of the relationship between them. Thus, man's theoretic or spiritual activity of the mind is made up of intuition and logical thought. The other basic, spiritual activity which Croce recognized is the practical spirit or the will. This activity differs from the theoretic in that it is productive, not of knowledge, but of actions, which includes not only the will to do, but the will *not* to do. This volition, or will, can be directed toward the particular, in which case it is economic, political, or utilitarian, or toward the universal, in which case it is ethical. However, the theoretical form is the basis for the will; practice follows

theory. But once an action has been completed, it becomes the object of thought. Thus, the spirit moves with a circular action; the four forms are coexistent and correlative in their distinction, but are not separate.

In analyzing artists and their work, Croce said that they cannot be criticized for their subjects; they can work only at what has moved their souls. And the question of sincerity has no place whatever. The artist can deceive no one since he can give form only to what is in his soul; he can deceive only by betraying himself as an artist by failing to execute his work in its essential nature. Further, art is independent of the useful and of the moral. An intuition or expression shows us the world, a truth, and thus has no relation to useful or economic activity. In artistic or literary criticism one should ask if it is expressive and what it expresses. Successful expression is beauty or, simply, expression because non-successful expression is not expression, or the ugly. Morality has nothing to do with this. Moral activity is the logic of the practical life. To will morally is to will the rational end, and whoever wills and acts morally cannot help willing and acting usefully.

By the same token, one should not criticize works according to laws, of epic or of tragedy, for instance, or according to rhetorical devices or categories. Croce felt that such terms should be used only to indicate certain loose groups, not to establish definitions or rigid requirements. Artistic expressions are either effective or ineffective, entirely on their own terms. Thus, Croce's theory of art enabled him to consider all works of art of any age according to one standard. For example, he felt a perfect work would be both classic and romantic at the same time since "classic" refers to the fully-shaped image and "romantic" to the emotional content.

Expression in the natural sense cannot be aesthetic expression, as could be seen in the difference between grief and a

song portraying grief. The complete process of aesthetic production he divided into four stages, as follows: impressions; expression or spiritual aesthetic synthesis; aesthetic pleasure; and translation of the aesthetic fact into physical phenomena, such as sounds, lines, shapes. Poetry, prose, and novels are physical stimulants of reproduction. These, plus memory and the assistance of physical facts, make possible the preservation and reproduction of intuitions produced by man. Natural beauty is simply a stimulus to this reproduction. This aesthetic activity will always agree with the practical because expression is truth. For example, the natural fact of the human body can be beautiful or ugly according to the point of view and to what is going on in the soul of the artist.

Croce stated that there is no such thing as the aesthetic progress of humanity because art is intuition; intuition is individuality; and individuality does not repeat itself. As a result, the history of the artistic production of the human race cannot be thought of as developing along a single line of progress. There are cycles, but not a steady development. Thus, the art of savages is not inferior; each individual's spiritual life has its artistic world and so none can be compared with others in terms of artistic value. Tradition and historical criticism keep alive all the works of art produced by mankind. Croce felt this function to be of paramount importance because life without it would be little more than animals living in the present or the immediate past.

In his *History of Aesthetics*, Croce described the progressive attempts to solve the fundamental problem of aesthetics. Beginning with the Greeks, he showed the development of philosophic thought to be confused, obscure, or sterile, with only a tenuous, golden thread running from Aristotle to Vico, Schleiermacher, and De Sanctis to the time of his own writing. Thus, he concluded that Aesthetic is a modern science. However, in his later years Croce rejected this view,

sacrificed without compunction his entire history, and replaced it with his conception of innumerable specific problems of aesthetics. Just as each work of art must be judged in its own terms, each thinker

must be studied in terms of his own problems and not in terms of other problems and solutions. Thus, Croce saw man's entire history as a constant, never-ending effort to attain the ideal.

THE AFFAIR

Type of work: Novel

Author: C. P. Snow (1905-)

Time: 1953-1954

Locale: London and Cambridge

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

LEWIS ELIOT, the narrator, a lawyer representing the aggrieved parties and formerly a Fellow of the College

MARGARET, his wife

DONALD HOWARD, a young physicist, dismissed by a Cambridge College on a charge of faking scientific evidence, seeking redress

LAURA HOWARD, his wife

MARTIN ELIOT, Lewis's brother, a Junior Tutor of the College

RONALD EDMUND NIGHTINGALE (ALEC), the College Bursar, a physicist and the long-standing enemy of Lewis

TOM ORBELL, a young political scientist and historian

JULIAN SKEFFINGTON, a physicist, the leader of the faction demanding Howard's reinstatement

MAURICE HARVEY LAWRENCE GAY, Professor Emeritus of Icelandic, who tries to employ Lewis to sue the College

FRANCIS ERNEST GETLIFFE, a distinguished physicist who presents crucial evidence in Howard's favor

ARTHUR BROWN, the Senior Tutor who hopes to become the next Master of the College

REDVERS THOMAS ARBUTHNOT CRAWFORD, the present Master

PAUL JAGO, a retired professor who helps convince Brown of Howard's possible innocence

G. S. CLARKE, a crippled modern language don who opposes Howard on religious and moral grounds

G. H. WINSLOW, the former College Bursar, who sits on the Court of Seniors

C. P. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* sequence tells the traditional story of a young man's rise in the world and his concurrent education in the ways of that world. Snow follows Lewis Eliot, the hero and narrator of the series, from working class origins to a place in the Establishment. In *The Affair*, Eliot has gained this position, and his special status as narrator of the novel and the fact that he came into the Establishment from the outside give the reader a special perspective on the workings of the men of power

with whom Eliot associates. This perspective is important, for the novel is less concerned with Donald Howard, the rather foolish young man on trial, than with those who are judging him; the Establishment, its way of running things, and its morality are themselves on trial. Specifically, Snow examines the somewhat ponderous way in which officialdom struggles with its conscience, tries to avoid deciding how to reconcile its own best interest with the demands of justice, and finally strikes a balance.

The Establishment is not, of course, an institution, and it is not a group of men of unanimously shared values and goals. Rather, it is composed of men of many types, brought together primarily by their desire to possess power and by their sense of responsibility, grasped in a variety of ways and to varying degrees, for using their power wisely. The obstacles to this task, both internal and external, are numerous; they are also a major object of Snow's attention. Power, one would imagine Snow to say, may well corrupt, but it does so many other interesting things, and brings out such strange latencies in those who possess it, that any blanket statement about its possessors and effects would be ridiculous. A minute study of its agents and their actions, however, can be enlightening.

As he did in *The Masters*, Snow studies power microcosmically, focusing on the closed society of a Cambridge College. Lewis Eliot, once a Fellow of the College, but now a high-ranking Civil Servant and established lawyer, is approached in London by Tom Orbell, a young political scientist, and Laura Howard, whose husband, a physicist and a Communist, has been dismissed by the college for using a faked photograph in a research publication. They appeal to Eliot as having influence with older Fellows, particularly with his brother Martin and Sir Francis Getliffe, both physicists, the latter a probable choice as next Master of the college. After Lewis asks some questions of his friends in the college and, at Mrs. Howard's insistence, confers with Donald Howard, he is completely convinced that Howard has been dealt with fairly.

Several weeks later, when Lewis is at Cambridge to spend Christmas with his brother, Julian Skeffington, a young physics Fellow, tells Martin and Lewis that he has evidence that Howard is innocent. Skeffington, a Conservative, strict, and absolutely correct, is co-executor of the estate of his wife's late uncle, Cecil Palairet, under whom How-

ard did his doctoral work. Going through Palairet's notebooks as they arrive at the college Bursary, Skeffington discovers that a photograph is missing from one of them: the accompanying notation suggests that it was probably a copy of the photograph Howard had used in his research. From this discovery Skeffington infers that old Palairet, for some unknown reason, gave Howard the photograph as a bona fide piece of scientific evidence on which Howard, then in all good faith if not in good judgment, based his subsequent work. Skeffington is absolutely convinced, now, of Howard's innocence, but Lewis and Martin are much less so, though they ultimately come around to the view that Howard's case should be reopened.

Skeffington and Martin try to form a majority of the Fellows to demand the reopening of the case. This attempt allows Snow to explore the power structure of the college and the changes in it since Lewis was personally involved in its politics. As Snow is fond of pointing out, politics obeys strange rules. Martin and Getliffe are liberals, Orbell and Skeffington conservatives, but all are for reopening the case. Most of the younger Fellows are either conservatives or apolitical, the exact opposite of the case at the time of the election described in *The Masters*, published in 1937. Martin is a natural politician, but, as described in *The New Men*, he once threw away the chance to wield great power in the scientific-administrative establishment by publicly condemning the bombing of Nagasaki. Getliffe is politically naïve, was a major power in scientific research during World War II and is already a scientist of extreme distinction, something Martin Eliot will never be. Martin and Francis Getliffe, however, both want the Mastership (about to be vacant), and both are willing to sacrifice important influence to help Howard, whom they both find stupid, ungrateful, and obnoxious. Skeffington seems to have everything: he was a war hero and could have succeeded in al-

most any field; instead, he has chosen a career in physics, and is engaged in study of the ionosphere, a field in which he has little natural ability. Orbell is a student of politics, but has less political sense even than Getliffe or Skeffington.

The decision-making body in this case is the Court of Seniors, composed of Crawford (the Master), Winslow (the former Bursar), Arthur Brown (the Senior Tutor), and Nightingale (the Bursar and a bitter rival of Eliot since the days of Crawford's election). Two other Fellows have seniority, but one, M. L. H. Gay, now somewhat senile at ninety-two, has been excluded, and Paul Jago, a virtual recluse since losing the last Mastership election, excludes himself. The former, in fact, tries to engage Lewis to sue the College for excluding him; Snow develops this comic subplot extensively, presumably to show what men of great distinction—as Palaret was—can do in their dotage. Brown, Crawford, and Winslow, re-examine the evidence and find Howard still guilty. At this point, however, Skeffington threatens to make a *cause célèbre* of the case, and, to avoid publicity, the Seniors agree to conduct a quasi-trial, with Lewis Eliot representing Howard and Dawson-Hill, a former student of some legal fame, representing the Seniors. Almost half the novel is devoted to the trial.

The trial goes badly for Howard. A weak self-advocate, he seems almost uninterested in establishing his innocence. Palaret had been respected, an important scientist; if the issue boils down to which of the two was more likely to have faked evidence, anyone—Martin, Lewis, and Getliffe included—would say Howard. It soon becomes clear, in fact, that the only way to save Howard is to suggest how the missing photograph disappeared. To do so, however, means covertly accusing Nightingale, the first to receive the books, of tampering with them. The Howard party finally decides to act. Getliffe insists on making the suggestion to the Board, though he, as the favorite for

the next Mastership, has the most to lose and is not well-suited by temperament for such a task. He does so, and Nightingale makes the mistake of countering with the suggestions that the missing photograph was not the one used by Howard and that Skeffington could have removed the photograph from the Palaret notebooks in order to reopen the case.

This tactic convinces Winslow of the possibility of Howard's innocence and leaves Brown with the deciding vote; Nightingale, of course, votes against acquittal, and Crawford is still undecided. That night Paul Jago comes to see Brown; the two had been close friends before Jago lost the election to Crawford. Though it causes him great anguish, Jago tells Brown that, after Nightingale had made a personal attack on Mrs. Jago during the 1937 election, she had tried to kill herself: by divulging this information he hopes to convince Brown, who is realistic and shrewd, yet stubborn, that Nightingale might be guilty, that Howard might be innocent. He succeeds, paving the way for a compromise by which Howard is reinstated with full pay, but has the period of his suspension counted against his contract, so that he can soon be dismissed. This finding is considered a victory for Howard. Although Skeffington and Orbell want to ask for complete exoneration, Howard, apparently tired of the whole affair, decides to accept it.

In *The Affair*, a group of reasonable, good-natured, intelligent men commit, or appear to commit, a serious injustice. Only the determined efforts of another group correct the injustice—if, indeed, Howard is innocent; the novel leaves the question open. But Snow's primary interest is not the question of innocence and guilt or that of justice and injustice. Rather, he examines the ways in which the individuals working in various groups make decisions on moral questions: what peculiar combinations of ideology, self-interest, ethical principle, and insight activate these men; how their decisions can be challenged and changed.

This focus is not merely a perspective; it also represents a value. By returning Lewis Eliot to the milieu of his young adulthood, Snow invites comparison of the various generations. He finds the young men of the college poor politicians—in the sense that Arthur Brown has been a superb politician—and the older men less flexible, the system working less well than it was even in the late 1930's. Justice, his story implies, is best served by those who know its limitations and its dependence on imperfect human beings; it is often damaged by moral absolutists.

We are reminded that Snow is primarily a novelist—a storyteller and observer of human nature in action—and not a moralist. He leaves us with no clear-cut answers, not even with a final judgment of who is innocent and who is guilty. What we are left with a revealing picture of how men work with and against each other to achieve what they consider to be worthy goals, the ironic knowledge that, more often than not, these men miscalculate and misunderstand, and the prediction that the ability of men to work well together is decreasing.

AFTER STRANGE GODS

Type of work: Critical and cultural essay

Author: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

First published: 1933

In 1919, T. S. Eliot published a short essay titled "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in which he attempted to correct a popular notion of tradition which would oppose that term to individuality and originality. Eliot argues that a contemporary writer must neither slavishly imitate the past nor imagine that he, as an individual, can be independant of the past. Making use of the philosopher William James's ideas, Eliot explains that tradition affects what an individual can do and that what is newly added to that tradition in some small way changes the entire order, from the beginnings to the present. In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot develops and further defines the line of thought begun in the earlier essay, and he goes on specifically to identify the errors which an inordinate and finally misguided reliance on sheer individuality produces.

Eliot perceived that the equating of tradition merely with what we commonly call the traditional not only falsifies the true meaning of tradition in its profoundest sense, but also leads to an exaggerated and dangerous valuation of the individual, of originality and newness. An individual writer who revolts against tradition

is forced to emphasize what in himself is most inimicable to that tradition as he conceives it. He will, or has, emphasized passion for its own sake, or as the sole evidence of vitality; he will attempt to concoct his own mythos, his own worldview, and be led, as Yeats was, into abstraction and solipsism. Eliot is aware, though he plays down the fact, that modern writers, including himself, have been driven to fashion a new worldview because the authority of the old Christian-humanist tradition failed during the nineteenth century, at least. His view is that the true Christian tradition, embodied in art and literature as well as in theology and morality, has changed but has not failed.

His argument is complex and challenging; indeed, it is a frontal attack against many of the greatest literary geniuses of this century. Eliot does not question their genius, only some of the ends that genius has been led to. He attacks the notion that tradition is merely those customs, attitudes, or books which, by virtue of having been accepted in the past are therefore to be revered as unchanging standards of taste and behavior in the present. Such a naïve notion of tradition, or or-

thodoxy, makes rigid the authority of the past and makes of it a static criterion of excellence against which the living revolt as from the dead.

Rebelling against a false notion, the modern individualist is led to exploit his differences from others. Eliot would agree, up to a point, with Pound's injunction to "make it new," but he warns against newness for its own sake, which then is merely novelty or device or, worse, dangerous self-aggrandizement. Eliot argues that the tradition is not static, but dynamic; a writer, he says, cannot merely mimic what has already been done well, nor can he ignore what has been done. Tradition is the past always reinterpreted, reborn, in the present. It is, finally, our culture, and that culture is and remains essentially Christian in metaphysics and morality. A writer can express his originality, his individuality within it, but he cannot escape it or make up his own tradition. One might well counter by asserting that even in terms of Christianity the tradition has many mansions, that the Church stands for only an aspect of our culture. In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot is, in fact, willing to have the Church act as final arbiter in all matters of morals and speculation. Many will find this view narrow; but it is a stern narrowness which has behind it great weight, whether it appears quite democratic or not.

In fact, Eliot abhors what is usually meant by democracy, seeing it as a half truth fostered by Rationalism and Liberalism and inspired by the leveling tendencies of rebellious and uncultivated Protestantism. To Eliot, D. H. Lawrence was crippled by his childhood immersion in a particularly enthusiastic, uncritical Protestantism, which provided Lawrence's mother with no standards with which to judge husband or sons. The result is that, to Eliot, Lawrence cannot portray human relationships in terms of any even ordinary social morality. Eliot believes in Original Sin. That is why an Inner Light, which was Lawrence's

guide, may as well be the deception of the devil as a true intuition of goodness. So, inadvertently, the modern genius who goes it alone may end by playing devil's advocate. Eliot sees Lawrence as a false, fatal leader, Pound as a blind servant of the very mercantile, middle-class society he so deplored. Even Irving Babbitt, as apparently cosmopolitan as Pound, revealed in his over-insistance on reason the narrowness of his conception of orthodoxy and tradition. Yeats grew beyond his earlier attempts to fashion a new tradition. Of Pound's scathing portrait of Hell, peopled by types drawn from modern life, all those given over to "money-lust," Eliot comments that Ezra Pound's Hell offers few terrors for the modern mind because it is for other people, not the beholder. It is so because Pound has no real conception of Hell, because he has no idea of sin, because he has no notion of any tradition other than the Protestant middle-class traditionalism which fostered him and against which he inveighs. Eliot's is a searching criticism.

To know oneself truly is to know one's origins. This is having the historical sense which views the temporal and the timeless together. Tradition, as Eliot defines it in *After Strange Gods*, is the sum of all actions, beliefs, and customs that men have acquired by living together in a common society. These two notions combine to produce Eliot's conception of culture. We use our minds, trained in the historical sense, to preserve from the past all that is worth preserving and making this heritage, so far as we are able, the basis of the sort of society we desire. What this attempt finally requires, says Eliot, is a fundamental unity of religious background. He opposes the abstract sense of political or national community to this religiously oriented sense of people and place. Orthodoxy, as Eliot means the term, is not only Church authority, but also the conscious use of intelligence to foster and preserve the culture described above. Heresy, of which the individualistic authors already mentioned are guilty,

is a denial of the very basis of such a culture, such a society.

Heresy is threatening to tradition and order. Without orthodoxy, there is likely to be no very clear conception of tradition. Without a sense of tradition, views of extreme individualism are probable. Every writer is likely, therefore, to regard himself as a messiah. Because there are many messiahs, the public will finally come to accept all and believe seriously in none. Without power to discriminate, the public accumulates merely "experiences." When one idea is as good as any other, there is no idea at all and people live

blindly, at the mercy of their feelings and of the public manipulators. We are left not with a community, a culture, but with an abstraction: the State.

In Eliot's view, the flight from orthodoxy leads through extreme individuality to a final loss of individuality, of the true and real distinctions among men, as well as their cultural unanimity. Modern man is left lonely in an empty-witted crowd. He has democracy but no equality; education, and no enlightenment; money and no satisfaction; great writers, perhaps, but no one to read them.

THE AGE OF REASON

Type of work: Theological study

Author: Thomas Paine (1737-1809)

First published: Part I, 1794; Part II, 1795

In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine was driven by the same impulses that had energized such earlier works as the Revolutionary pamphlets *Common Sense* and *The Crisis*. In *The Rights of Man* he expressed his hatred of enslavement and his belief that all men have the natural right to be free of all tyranny, physical, mental, and spiritual: Benjamin Franklin once said, "Where liberty is, there is my country." Paine replied, "Where liberty is not, there is mine." This idealistic altruism motivated him to give his writings to the world without any hope for financial remuneration.

In approach and style *The Age of Reason* is similar also to that of the earlier works. The author is direct, candid, simple, appeals to common sense, presents what to him is overwhelming evidence for his arguments, is at times ironic, jeering, sarcastic. He never writes down to his audience or forgets for whom he is writing.

It is one of the ironies of the literary and theological world that *The Age of Reason*, which, although written from the well of the author's doubts of traditional religion, was intended primarily to save

the world from atheism, should bring against Paine the charge of the atheism that he was trying to combat. As a result of this book the great reputation he had earlier enjoyed as one of the prime movers in the War for Independence was blackened; he became feared throughout America because of his alleged atheism.

Paine's doubts about conventional religion were deep-seated. John Adams said that Paine had them in 1776, and Paine himself says in *The Ages of Reason* that he had entertained such ideas for many years. Paine's ideas grew out of his idealistic view that man's condition in regard to religion could be better. They were strengthened by the influences of his Quakerism, his Newtonian bent toward science, the examples of classical antiquity in the teachings of such people as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and the great society in which they lived, and the revelations of the early researches in Eastern religions, of which Paine was one of the early comparative religionists.

The Age of Reason is subtitled "An investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology." In the dedication to his "Fellow-Citizens of the United States of

America," Paine insists that the views he is about to express are his alone, and he reaffirms his belief in the right of every individual to form his own opinion, for to deny the right of every individual to his own beliefs leads to slavery. He would therefore, he says, examine all aspects of life, especially religion, with reason.

His own position is made clear from the start. He believes in one God and, like all Newtonians, he professes the Deistic hope for happiness in another world because, contrary to the Calvinistic doctrines which he detested, Deism affords a happiness not found in other religions. Paine states explicitly that he does not believe in the creeds professed by any churches, for his own mind is his tabernacle. All national institutions of faith and dogma have been instituted to tyrannize over mankind, he feels.

The universal purpose of churches, to beguile or deceive the people, is strengthened by another characteristic they all have in common, the pretense of some special mission from God communicated to certain individuals: Moses to the Jews, Jesus Christ to the Christians, Mahomet to the Turks. These revelations must be accepted on faith because there is never any pragmatic truth vouchsafing their validity.

Paine has no criticism of Jesus. He was, Paine feels, a virtuous and amiable man. But he wrote nothing about his so-called special mission on earth. Thus, all accounts about him were written by others, many long after his death. For this reason they are open to suspicion. That Jesus existed is an unquestionable historical fact, and that he preached morality is certain. But that he claimed to be the Saviour of the world is indeed suspect. Further, most of the writings about Jesus as Saviour, the bases of Christianity, differ very little from the writings of other mythologies and calumniate the wisdom of the Almighty.

Paine examines in detail the whole structure of Christianity. He investigates the books of the Old Testament. He

seizes upon the Apocrypha, rejected by those who established the Biblical canon, and concludes that all books were chosen arbitrarily; had others been chosen or rejected the present basic structure of Christianity would have been altered. The books that were chosen are filled with "obscene" stories, "voluptuous debaucheries," and "cruel and torturous executions" which constitute a "history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind." Paine detests these stories, as he despises all cruelty. The Proverbs, attributed to Solomon, are inferior to the proverbs of the Spaniards and are less wise and economical than those of Benjamin Franklin. Here, as elsewhere, Paine demonstrates his great respect for the wisdom and general goodness of the man who had been instrumental in getting Paine to come to America in 1774.

The New Testament, Paine claimed, is likewise spurious. Had Jesus been truly the Saviour of mankind he surely would have arranged to have this knowledge transmitted to the world during his lifetime. He was in fact a Son of God only in the way all men are, and the falsehoods about his divinity were written after his death. Like scholars interested in comparative mythologies, Paine notes that it is curious that all leaders of religions come from obscure or unusual parentage: "Moses was a foundling; Jesus was born in a stable; Mahomet was a mule driver."

Having destroyed the sanctity of the Bible as a basis of religion, Paine asks if there is no word of God, no revelation. Like a good Deist, his response is without equivocation. The true theology is nature, and the "word of God is the Creation we behold," and only in the creation are united all our "ideas and conceptions of a *word of God*." God to him is a *first cause*. Here, with an adroitness and wit more characteristic of his earlier works, he turns the Christian's own assertions against him. The Christian "system of faith," he says, seems to be a "species of

atheism," a kind of "denial of God," for it believes in a man rather than in the true God and interposes "between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer." All such beliefs run counter to Deism, which believes in one Deity who is wise and benign and which imitates him in all things moral, scientific, and mechanical.

The Christian belief in miracles brings forth from Paine his bitterest tirades, almost as fiery and heated as they had been in his earlier works. Mysteries, he says, run counter to true religion. He jeeringly examines the miracle of the whale swallowing Jonah and concludes that although it approaches the marvelous it would have been much more marvelous if Jonah had swallowed the whale. He derides especially the "most extraordinary" of all miracles of the New Testament, that of Satan flying Jesus to the top of a high mountain and promising him all the kingdoms throughout the world. Paine wonders why both then did not discover America; he questions whether "his sooty highness" was interested only in *kingdoms*.

One of Paine's more amusing refutations of Biblical lore is found in Part II. Though his book is obviously serious in intent, he delights in poking fun wherever possible. He attacks the wisdom of Solomon as claimed in Ecclesiastes. Paine affirms that Solomon should have cried out that "All is vanity," for with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, how could any man in retrospect conclude anything else? Then Paine contrasts Solomon with Benjamin Franklin, whom he glorifies almost to deification; he claims that Franklin was wiser than Solomon, for his "mind was ever young, his temper ever serene; science, that never grows gray, was always his mistress."

Between Part I and Part II Paine spent eleven months in a French prison. Believing that Part I had been written in too great haste without a Bible handy for reference, Paine attempts to buttress his

former statements with details. He had directed Part I against the "three frauds, *mystery, miracle, and prophecy*," and he intended to blast revelation in Part II, for although all things are possible with God, he is against the use of "pretended revelation," which is "the imposition of one man upon another." He feels that most of the wickedness, the greatest cruelties and miseries that have broken the human race, have originated in the hoax called revelation. Whereas Deism teaches without any possibility of deceit, Christianity thrives on deceit. Religion becomes form instead of fact, "of notion instead of principle," and morality is replaced by faith, which had its beginnings in a "supposed debauchery."

Part II is an attack on the Bible as such, not as a statement of religion. Except in details, in more evidence, and more direct point by point examination and refutation, Part II advances Paine's thesis little beyond its grounds in Part I. Paine ends Part II, as he generally ended his works, with a challenge to the reader. He has shown, he says, that the Bible is filled with "impositions and forgeries," and he invites readers to refute him if they can. He hopes that his ideas will cause readers to think for themselves, for he is certain that when opinions are allowed to thrive in a free air "truth will finally and powerfully prevail."

Little in the book is not good Deistical doctrine which could have been said as easily by Franklin or any other Deist. Paine's style and technique, however, are uniquely his. He is candid in approach and unrelenting in carrying out his thesis. His style is simple, honest, direct, and free of all cant and reverence. Because of his subject matter and his approach, he was felt to be unscientific and vulgar. When it was first announced that Paine was going to write on the subject of religion, many Americans approved; but as the work appeared, reprinted far and wide in newspapers, approval turned to disapprobation. Paine's reputation was so blackened that after his return to the

United States in 1802 he found himself virtually without friends. Paine's pen was always his most important weapon, but the reputation that the earlier pen had created the one which wrote *The Age of Reason* destroyed.

THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

Type of work: Novel

Author: Lawrence Durrell (1911-)

Time: Just before and during World War II

Locale: Alexandria, Egypt

First published: *Justine*, 1957; *Balthazar*, 1958; *Mountolive*, 1958; *Clea*, 1961

Principal characters:

L. G. DARLEY, an Anglo-Irish school teacher and would-be writer
 PERCY PURSEWARDEN, an erudite, ironical English writer
 LIZA PURSEWARDEN, the writer's blind sister
 DAVID MOUNTOLIVE, a British diplomat
 JOSHUA SCOBIE, an English pederast employed by Egyptian police
 JOHN KEATS, an English journalist
 MASKELYNE, a British intelligence officer
 LORD ERROL, Head of Chancery in the British Embassy in Egypt
 NESSIM HOSNANI, a Coptic banker and conspirator
 JUSTINE HOSNANI, his Jewish wife
 FALTHAUS HOSNANI, his father, a fervid Copt
 LEILA HOSNANI, his intellectual and beautiful mother, who loves Mountolive
 NAROUZ HOSNANI, his younger, hairlipped brother, a religious fanatic
 S. BALTHAZAR, a Jewish doctor and mystic
 AMARIL, a gynecologist and romantic
 PAUL CAPODISTRA, an ugly, rich lecherer, also a conspirator
 GEORGES GASTON POMBAL, a French Foreign Service official
 MELISSA ARTEMIS, a pale, sick Greek dancer and prostitute
 CLEA MONTIS, a golden blonde painter
 MNEMJIAN, a dwarf barber
 COHEN, a furrier and conspirator in league with Nessim
 MEMLIK PASHA, the Egyptian Minister of Interior
 HAMID, Darley's one-eyed houseboy
 TOTO DE BRUNEL, a gigolo and homosexual serving as a French agent
 SELIM, Nessim's servant
 NIMROD, an Egyptian magistrate
 CAPODISTRIA

Lawrence Durrell's four-volume novel, rather surprisingly for a work of such size and difficulty, was a popular success from the moment the first volume of it was published in 1957. Perhaps it was so enthusiastically received because it is a love story, the ubiquitous romantic adventure done up in a somewhat flamboyant manner. Yet that love story is narrated in a fragmented, involuted, obscure manner and refracted through complex ideas and experimental techniques. As a plethora

of interpretative studies already published by scholar-critics testify, the work is as subtle and demanding intellectually as fiction can be, and certainly is too formidably so to be pleasurable casual reading for a general audience. Whatever the reasons for its popular success, *The Alexandria Quartet* violates the first prejudice of modern criticism by uniting intelligence with feeling in a way that engages and entertains all the human faculties without compromising the loftiest aesthetic aims.

In doing so it confutes established clichés about alienation, dissociation of sensibility, and dehumanization as the artist's, and man's, inescapable predicament in the twentieth century.

There is nothing secret about the ideas that provide the intellectual scaffolding for *The Alexandria Quartet*; Durrell states them quite explicitly in the novel itself, then reiterates them in appended notes and in comments elsewhere on the work. Conscious of himself as a modern writer with immediate predecessors who gave great weight in their work to the chaos and disorder of contemporary experience, Durrell regarded his purpose in writing this work as a search for a morphological form appropriate to our time. This statement, taken from a note appended by Durrell to *Balthazar*, is accompanied by the further explanation that the form must be taken from science—Einstein's relativity physics, to be exact—because contemporary literature lacks classic unity. The scientific concept of a space-time continuum, an infinitely ramifying and exfoliating process-reality without fixable boundaries or exhaustible possibilities, serves as the structural foundation for a realistic narrative intended to mirror the qualities of such a universe and so is "a word continuum," Durrell's suggested descriptive subtitle for *The Alexandria Quartet* supplied in a note to *Clea*. But all novels, this one no exception, must have finite boundaries, no matter how arbitrary they may be. So Durrell, though he concludes *Clea* with "work points" for further possible expansion of the word *continuum*, limits himself to four volumes, three, as he says, of space and one of time. Einsteinian space-time theories are as much theories of knowing as they are theories of natural reality.

Correspondingly, the first three volumes, covering roughly the same time span and being reconstructions of the past, "interlap" and "interweave" perspectives and evidence on events that occurred among a coterie of people with diverse national backgrounds living in

Alexandria, Egypt, just prior to World War II. Moreover, the first two, in the subjective mode, are narrated by L. G. Darley, the "subject" and protagonist of the quartet, and the third, *Mountolive*, is a naturalistic novel in the third person in which Darley participates as a character and becomes, as Durrell points out, an "object." The last novel, though in the past tense, covers the present, a later time period than the first three, providing therefore a sequel to them. Described in this manner the ideas do not present much difficulty, but they imply and issue into entanglements foreign to our customary thought habits.

All this relativity scaffolding, as Durrell admits, might seem rather pretentious, a dillettantish display of scientific mumbo-jumbo, and if it were nothing more than superficial learning pawned off as profundity, then it would be. But in *The Alexandria Quartet*, a thought-out work, a typically self-conscious performance for modern literature, ideas are an integral part of its theme and form. It is a novel about writing a novel (it ends at its beginning, with Darley prepared to assume his artithood and writing down that age-old opening for a story, "Once upon a time . . ."), but its self-consciousness is functional. All the major characters, especially Pursewarden, a novelist himself, take the advanced ideas of relativity as commonplaces in their world and pass them on to Darley in such a way that they outline for him the novel he and Durrell eventually write. Active powers in the plot of the novel, the ideas, produced by the imagination reflecting upon its own position and impulses, are a shaping force in the novel's generation, so much so that their role in Darley's maturation is as great as love, the book's subject and the ultimate energy source. Love and intellect, or the counter poles of energy and form, mutually abet each other in the upward course of the life of the imagination. This role of ideas in the novel is perhaps most evident in Darley's progress, or the novel's movement, from

subjective impressionism in *Justine* to objectivity in *Mountolive*, whereby Darley matures as he becomes better acquainted with the truth and the novel frees itself from extreme subjectivism. The relativity scaffolding, in other words, equips Durrell with the instrument whereby he himself and his characters can come into touch with an external order of time and space, the inner and outer realities thereby confirming one another, the head complementing and reinforcing the heart.

On another level this happy marriage of opposites amounts to a marriage of reason and imagination, the off-spring of which is "science-fiction," Durrell's suggested classification for *The Alexandria Quartet*, meaning by that not the science fantasy of the popular arts but a blending of scientific truth and the fictive imagination. Love, the subject of this novel, is, after all, a passion to unite, whether it be bodies in sex, minds in truth, or souls in spiritual oneness. When love is, in Whitman's phrase, the keelson of creation, everything that exists does so in a mysterious tension with its opposite to which it is simultaneously drawn to complete itself, from which it is repelled for self-survival, and through which, regardless of whether attraction or repulsion is uppermost, interdependence makes the existence of both possible. In this respect space and time are "married," simultaneously separate yet interrelated, and their union, a field with change occurring within it, is a prerequisite to events. So are subject and object, thought and love, science and fiction "married." A pair of such terms, in fact, points to polarities in tension characteristic of whatever exists, including the psyche, which has a "bisexual nature." Darley, an egoist, hates being alone and a bachelor; Balthazar, a Jewish doctor, says of Cavafy, a poet, that he subscribed to the proposition that if one imagines, he therefore belongs and is free. These are instances of polarities in tension in human behavior.

Durrell calls this phenomenon dimor-

phism, and it is one of the three most important principles in the novel. The second is cyclism, the rhythmic swing from one pole to the other, then back again. This dynamic process is most obvious in Darley's three love affairs, where the first and third women are essentially the same but Darley cannot love the first, Melissa, a Greek whose identifying trait is "charity," because he has not passed through the dark lady. When he has, he can love Clea, a Frenchwoman, and like the Greek a fair lady, whose identifying traits are "innocence and generosity." Mysteriously, the poles in tension generate the power which begets change or, in organic life and fortunate human psychic development, growth. The sea, appropriately, is Darley's clock; it keeps the time, symbolically and literally, of the diastolic-systolic process by which change or growth proceed in their inexorable course.

The Alexandria Quartet is a book of changes, a charting of numerous transformations. The largest, unobtrusively in the background, is the culture-wide one represented by World War II. The work is a novel of the city, of urban man's historically unique human environment. (Though romantic, nature plays a minimal role in it; structurally it is a gallery of people, what is exchanged between man and man, or in love, being the matrix from which growth issues; for this and other reasons *The Alexandria Quartet* is a strange hybrid that can be labelled "romantic humanism.") One important pair of terms is "country-city," embodied in the Hosnani brothers Narouz-Nessim and associated with "ancient ways—the new culture," and the transformation from the former to the latter is made through the cultural crisis and agony manifested in war. The fact that the initial events for the individuals occur just prior to the war, in the period of gathering gloom, that Darley goes through his dark night of self-examination and purification, and the novel ends as the war is

drawing to a close, so that the personal life and the public world simultaneously evolve into a new synthesis, is obviously not accidental. A new era is announced at the end of the cycle for individual and society.

The dimorphic features in this work are far too numerous and interrelated to do justice to here; in addition to those already mentioned, they range from overall motifs such as politics-love and life-art through the commonplace sexual ones to character pairings. But since the book is about Alexandria, little sense can be made out of what is going on in the novel unless the role of the city, its opposition to the individual, is kept clearly in mind. Durrell originally intended to use Athens as his setting, but finally he decided on Alexandria, he said, because it is the historical gateway through which our civilization has passed. When laying down his purpose in writing early in *Justine*, Darley states his intention to "rebuild" the city in his imagination, and he comments further that the city should be judged, for here people have suffered its conflicts which they mistook for their own. But the city is the people who comprise it. When *Justine* claims that people are caught by a projected will too strong and deliberate to be human, she is saying something about herself, being, as she must, an incarnation of the city's spirit. *Justine* departs from Alexandria once but then returns and remains there; Darley, and several other major characters, depart twice, the second time for good. (They move on to Paris, another city of love, a maturer or more human one.) The novel, consequently, is not a naturalistic one based on the tyranny of environment over the person. Alexandria does not have a death grip on its inhabitants; rather, it is a juncture through which they must pass. During the time they are there; they are subject to its necessities; but they can, given a talent for it, pass beyond its determinism to freedom. Environment and individual can be in or out

of phase, but only when they are in phase is the environment, Alexandria in this case, experienced as a projection of one's self-enslavement.

Though simple in its outlines and rigorously governed by dimorphism and cyclism, this novel is exceedingly complex in its details. One reason for this complexity is the fact that, within the shifting perspectives of time and personality, nothing specific ever comes, or can come, into clear focus. In the first place, since three of the volumes are in the first person, the structure of the novel is based on the narrator's associations rather than on temporal or logical sequence; second, in a world of relativity chance or random events are as important as predictable causality. Finally, and most importantly, this world is governed by the principle of indeterminacy, the third principle along with dimorphism and cyclism. No ultimate or absolute certainty about a fact is possible. It wears infinite masks and changes guises with the eye of the beholder, a kaleidoscope undergoing perpetual rearrangement. Thus, temporal sequence in the novel is extremely vague (Durrell gives no calendar dates to guide by), and events that seem to be coming into clear focus suddenly blur again or, after a moment's comparison of present with past accounts of them, become indeterminable.

Quite aware that this vagueness exists, Durrell insists that the novel be regarded as a "relativity poem," a tale on one level, a poetic parable on another, that its characters are not people only but symbols also. Suggestiveness, not literalness, stimulation of the imagination, not conceptual certitude, are its intended effect. For this reason Durrell has compared the novel to a pack of Tarot cards; like the Tarot pack it reveals the truth, from the most gross to the rarest, that its reader is prepared to receive. Durrell would engage his reader in his novel in the same relative way that he is engaged in life and the scientist in nature. The honest reader of true fiction,

Durrell implies, is necessarily in that fix anyway; his being, like that of the universe he inhabits, is dimorphic and he can perceive that range of wave lengths in the spectrum between the poles that his consciousness, owing to his temperament, culture, and stage of development, is capable of receiving and recording. The novel, indeed, the world, is a mirror reflecting not the times or nature but one's inner self, which paradoxically is also the external universe, or a facet of it. At any rate, it is experienced as, in Wallace Stevens' phrase, "a pressure pushing back," and so is out there at the same time that it is within. The subjective and objective are no longer dichotomized and open to the chicken-egg question, but are inseparable, unfathomable functions of each other.

Its poetic quality makes *The Alexandria Quartet* difficult to follow in detail and almost impossible to summarize. But the general narrative framework, the overall pattern in which all the parts must fit to make sense, is as clear as the structural framework. Darley, an Anglo-Irish school teacher living in Alexandria, Egypt, undergoes an education in love and time. In interviews Durrell has explained what Darley's education consists of by stating that men are not born human, but life makes them so. Thus, sex-love-truth (or body-soul-mind), the facets in man of that power which the physicist calls energy, impels Darley toward self-realization. Since all external change is meaningless, Darley's humanization must come from forces awakened within which will bring him to a state of poetic illumination. Darley, as man and artist, is in pursuit of an awakening or illumination whereby love-truth will make him free. Liberated, his imagination, the creative principle in man, capable of love at its highest, that is, its most moral, and equipped with the wisdom following from self-knowledge, will be able to act as God reputedly did in creating the world, and in that act it will have returned to the pristine source of all being

—it will have performed the aboriginal act.

The various people and events in the novel make sense in so far as they contribute, narratively and thematically, via contrast, relevant orchestration, or dramatic progression, to elucidating Darley's education. If the preceding description of what happens in the novel is accurate, then Darley must be ignorant at the beginning of his story; he must be suffering from an erotic-knowledge deficiency. And indeed he is. Situated on an island in the Cyclades, to which he has withdrawn after the collapse of his love affair with Justine Hosnani, Darley speaks of himself at the time he begins writing as a sick man needing to heal himself by understanding all that has happened to him in Alexandria. He meditates upon Alexandria and the people he had known intimately there. With his memories, Justine's diaries, and *Moeurs*, a diary-novel by Arnauti, Justine's first husband, he intends to review that era in his immediate past in order to find the meaning in the pattern of events. Though at one point he proclaims to have no pretensions to art, he wants the people, especially, Melissa Artemis and Justine Hosnani, two women in his life in Alexandria, to reveal the truth that art can uncover. To cure himself of the sickness with which erotic love has infected him, Darley must learn the truth about the ordeal to which he has been subjected; through understanding the powers of darkness, and by transforming suffering into life, he will grow and love again.

Like Stendhal in *The Life of Henri Brulard*, Darley measures his life in love affairs. Strangely for the conventions of fiction, he has no past—no birthplace, family, educational or vocational background—prior to meeting Melissa, who also is without a history. Both at the time they become lovers had reached a point of existential nullity, but love becomes, for Darley, a suddenly opened door. Three loves serve as the landmarks in his progress and together constitute a self-

enclosed psychological episode. The first and last, Melissa Artemis and Clea Montis, are remarkably alike beneath superficial difference, but Melissa, who dies, is a victim of Darley's ignorance because he is not prepared at the time of their affair to value and return her kind of love. Though eventually her face disappears from his memory, that is, drops from the life of his imagination, Darley's guilty feelings over abandoning her for Justine are powerful psychic forces in preparing him to love Clea, a fellow artist, originally virginal, whose voice in the form of letters concludes all three of the volumes narrated by Darley (so is the terminal toward which he is blindly, unconsciously moving throughout his ruminations), and who is undergoing the same education (including a dark, secret love affair with Amaril) in order to be prepared for and finally joined with Darley. But to get to Clea, Darley must pass through Justine, the black goddess, who captures and holds him in thrall during the important phase of his life in Alexandria.

As a juncture through which our civilization and the people in the novel pass, Alexandria represents a hub where the tensions between the flesh and the spirit are at their most pronounced. Justine as an incarnation of the city's sensuality is correspondingly possessed by its contradictory demons of self-indulgence and self-revulsion. Hounded by her egoistic self-absorption, she desperately seeks escape from herself through fantasies, political causes, and sex, but succeeds only in devouring others. Balthazar, another point of revelation, a doctor at a venereal disease clinic and a devotee of the mystical Cabbala, has no deep interest in obsessive love but tries to cultivate a philosophical detachment. He is the opposite extreme from Justine, and the two together exemplify Alexandria's schizophrenia, a madness revealed in symptoms of exhaustion and world-weariness, a sense of deracination and failure, and an inability to respond to personal, individual assessments. Darley, though for a time the

city's prisoner, drugged, a failure with people, more and more deficient in love, is saved from its demons ultimately because he is both a part of the city's life and the observer who sits apart to watch it all.

The remedy for the seizure by passion or the furies of the self that Justine afflicts him with, Darley feels, is to understand her. That way he can free himself. He never succeeds, however, because in the world of relativity person-ality as a thing of absolutes is an illusion. Yet he does free himself of her simply by abandoning his desire to penetrate and really know, so that when he returns to Alexandria at the beginning of *Clea* she is passive and unbearable. The three preceding novels trace Darley's evolution to that point by submitting some crucial events to repeated and, as previously indicated, increasingly objective interpretations. In the first volume, *Justine*, which is written by Darley while in the mood of a melancholy lover, all events get a romantic reading. In the second volume, *Balthazar*, which consists essentially of Balthazar's comments on Darley's interpretation of the crucial events in *Justine*, all events get a philosophical reading, that is, one that favors intellectual motives and values. In the third, *Mountolive*, a third-person narrative, all events get a straight political reading. Love and politics have been fundamental antitheses in the novel from the beginning, opposite forms of power associated with man's private and public lives; and Mountolive also undergoes the same education Darley does, though he starts with a diplomat's severe self-denial as compared with Darley's self-concern as an artist, and Egypt replaces Alexandria as his abetting environment. Mountolive moves primarily on a political plane, Darley on an erotic or imaginative one. Regarding Justine, for instance, in the first novel she loves Darley for reasons of passion; in the second Balthazar, jolting Darley out of his romantic illusions claims she loved Pursewarden, who makes her laugh at herself,

and used Darley as a decoy to distract her husband; in the third it is revealed that she loved her husband, Nessim, and was carrying on affairs with Darley and Pursewarden to assist his political intrigues. It is hard to determine what role, if any, *Mountolive* has in Darley's progressive rehabilitation, but, regardless of its role, though he never reaches final understanding of Justine, Darley does get perspective upon himself and so is purged through objectivity of his romantic affliction.

The major event in the novel is Darley's act of imagination by which, through reconstructing what has happened to him, he liberates himself to the freedom of art. In performing his act of imagination, however, he weaves an intricate web of personal relations and political intrigue. The former occupy the foreground most of the time and are hopelessly entangled; the latter entails elaborate espionage and counterespionage centering around a plot by the Copts to protect their interests against the Moslems through giving aid to the establishment of an Israeli state in Palestine. (Darley serves as a British, Justine as a Coptic agent.)

Only two people besides Justine, however, have a major constructive influence on Darley. The first is Clea, his unobtrusive instructress in love. Calm, patient, generous, by precept and presence she quietly entices him toward mature, selfless love. The second is Pursewarden, an English writer of pronounced intellectual bent, a man given to irony, laughter, and cynicism. Pursewarden, who commits suicide, is, in fact, Darley's alter ego, his polar opposite in a dimorphic pair. He is the master in the training of Darley's imagination. Being too much aware, Pursewarden cannot act upon what he knows; he must pass it on to Darley, whose innocence, goodness, and readiness to love makes his life wide open, while the others', including Pursewarden's, are enclosed. The intellect must thrive for the awareness necessary to art and truth to be

possible, but then it must yield to naïve faith, hope, and passion so that the will to live can prevail. But before he serves his function and dies, Pursewarden describes the kind of novel he would like to write, the book that Darley and Durrell actually do write. Since Durrell and his characters are so articulate, and this articulateness is an integral element in the life of the imagination as *The Alexandria Quartet* defines it, it is fitting to conclude on Durrell's unsurpassably accurate characterization of the novel's aims and dominant qualities.

No greater evidence of Durrell's success in this endeavor could be found than the enthusiastic reception of *The Alexandria Quartet* both popularly and critically. As an exploration into modern love and organized on the proposition of relativity, it is a happy fusion of a simple passion with the most advanced understanding of reality. In effect, like all advanced contemporary thought and art, it is an answer to the "dissociation of sensibility" in Western culture during the past three centuries; it yokes thought and feeling, in classical terminology, reason and passion, in a brilliantly illuminating synthesis through a new form accurately reflecting the new world of the post-World War II period. Durrell has both thought and felt out his subject.

The place of *The Alexandria Quartet* in modern fiction can be best appreciated if it is kept in mind that Einsteinian physics, emerging around the turn of the century, produced a revolution not only in science but in the general understanding of life. The initial reaction by European writers to its overthrow of boxed space and clock time was despair, for by eliminating absolutes Einstein destroyed the grounds of established European social order, thought, and art. The despair resulted in an extreme subjectivity, if not solipsism. As George Orwell said about Henry Miller, the artist was "inside the whale"; his predicament was such that he could not seize hold of or effect the external world, but could only record its vi-

olent impact upon his otherwise impotent spirit. The novel of sensibility, or the psychological novel, dedicated to rendering a state of mind, replaced the realistic novel, the literary mode that evolved out of Newtonian physics, as a consequence; its great exemplars were James Joyce and Marcel Proust. But in the post-World War II period, after living in Einstein's world long enough to become accustomed to its novelties, the Western writer has adopted a new tone of confidence, and with that new tone has come an acceptance of man's position and powers in a creative universe.

The Alexandria Quartet, a loving book about love (all the characters are allowed just to be; they are not judged: even Justine has revived and started a new life at the end), exemplifies the new sense of man's being at home in the world, a new sense of a confirmation of the interior man by the exterior reality which allows us to exercise vital powers along lines of

excellence in a world affording them scope. To the state of awareness staked out as the province belonging to the novel of sensibility, *The Alexandria Quartet* adds time, the dimension in which action occurs. Thus Durrell has succeeded in his desire to incorporate imagination in and thereby bring back to the novel the force and meaning of action. His novel, openended like Darley, affirming a new era of hope like Camus' *The Plague*, is a consummate statement, the broadest in scope and profoundest in depth, for the present stage in the exploration of the territory discovered by Einstein. An engaging story on the most popular of subjects at the same time that it is a monument in the life of the mind in the twentieth century, Darley's "relativity poem" demands and is worthy of our most careful attention because it consists of the very stuff of which life is made today.

ALL FALL DOWN

Type of work: Novel

Author: James Leo Herlihy (1927-)

Time: The present

Locale: Cleveland, Ohio

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

CLINTON WILLIAMS, a boy reaching out toward life

RALPH WILLIAMS, his father

ANNABEL WILLIAMS, his mother

BERRY-BERRY, his older brother

ECHO O'BRIEN, a girl loved by Clinton and destroyed by Berry-berry

SHIRLEY, a young prostitute

James Branch Cabell once tried to compress the story of all human life into a single, simple image: man embarked upon a journey begun in diapers and completed in a shroud. But this statement, like all sweeping generalities, contains only a part-truth. The route by which man travels from the cradle to the grave is no broad highway but a road with many ups and downs, sudden turnings, and strange byways. To the modern novelist none of these is more interesting

or significant than the downward road to wisdom. In fiction today the beginning of knowledge is the loss of innocence and not a fear of the Lord.

The fable of innocence confronted by evil and gaining a sad kind of wisdom in the encounter is the theme of James Leo Herlihy's novel. The fact that the youthful hero of *All Fall Down* makes a long journey in the geography of his own soul puts him into some rather interesting literary company: Huck Finn on his raft,

Holden Caulfield exploring an adult world of hypocrisy and sham, Frankie Addams willing herself into becoming a member of the wedding. Although *All Fall Down* is a book that invites comparisons, to note them is not to say that Herlihy is in any way imitative. Quite the other way around, his ability to present the emotional adventures of youth as a difficult passage between childhood and maturity, and to tell the story as if it had never been written before, is striking proof of his imaginative force and dramatic control.

Clinton Williams, his hero, is a boy as free-wheeling in his character as Holden Caulfield, but in a vastly different way. Caulfield is an uncomplicated realist whose quickness of mind enables him to identify pretense wherever he thinks he finds it. Clinton, on the other hand, grows up pursuing an illusion, the glamour which his romantic imagination throws about his older brother, whom Caulfield would have catalogued at once as a phony. When the novel opens, Clinton is fourteen and his brother Berry-berry is away "on his travels," begun just after his twenty-first birthday. The Williams family has recently moved into a house in a different section of Cleveland. Clinton is afraid that Berry-berry will not be able to find this new house if he should return, and as a gesture of quiet protest he has stayed away from school for fifty-seven consecutive days. In the daytime he loafs in the Aloha Sweet Shop recording in his notebooks everything he sees or overhears. At home he eavesdrops on his parents' conversations, which he writes into his journals as well, along with copies of letters he has opened on the sly. During the time he has been skipping school he has filled twenty-five notebooks. His entries—Herlihy gives the reader a fair sampling—are as naïve, funny, boring, and revealing as one might expect. His romantic view of Berry-berry is the first interest of Clinton's life. The second is his tremendous curiosity about people and the nature of experi-

ence; hence his effort to put down everything he knows and learns in order that he may solve some of life's mysteries.

In many ways Clinton is his father's true son. Years before, Ralph Williams had been an active liberal, before he was trapped by marriage and a family. Theoretically he is in business, but he spends most of his time in the cellar with a jigsaw puzzle in front of him and a bottle of bourbon within reach. He has simplified his life to two convictions: that Christ had founded the Socialist Party and that Berry-berry will turn out all right in the end. Mrs. Williams is nervous, querulous, and tearful, constantly wishing for Berry-berry's return without ever realizing that he hates her.

The memory of the absent son is all that holds this strange family together. Ironically, Berry-berry is unworthy of their love or their hopes for his return. A bum, a pimp, and a sadist, he turns up first in one section of the country, then in another, is in jail or out, is either living off one of his women or else calling on his family for money to get him out of his latest escapade. Most of these facts are unknown to Clinton, however, during the time when he is working in an all-night eating place and saving his money against the day when he can join his brother. The opportunity comes when Berry-berry writes asking his father for two hundred dollars to invest in a shrimp-ing venture in Key Bonita, Florida. Ready to offer the money, Clinton takes a bus to Key Bonita, to find on his arrival that Berry-berry has already skipped town after mauling one of his lady loves. This knowledge comes to Clinton during the night he spends with a prostitute, and the realization of his brother's true nature is almost more than he can stand. He returns home, falls sick, and at one time during his illness contemplates suicide. He is saved when he falls shyly in love with Echo O'Brien, a girl older than he and the daughter of one of his mother's friends, who comes to visit in Cleveland.

Then Berry-berry returns and all is

forgotten, or at least forgiven, and the Williamses are reunited by love. As might have been expected, Berry-berry makes a play for Echo O'Brien. His parents hope that the affair will cause Berry-berry to settle down at last. Clinton accepts the fact of Echo's romance with his brother out of gratitude for the atmosphere of family happiness in which he now shares. But Berry-berry cannot be reclaimed from the moral rot that infects him. Refusing to accept responsibility for Echo's pregnant condition, he callously discards her and Echo commits suicide. Clinton at first intends to kill his brother, but in the end he decides that Berry-berry's knowledge of his own corruption is punishment enough. Berry-berry takes to the road again. Clinton begins writing in his notebooks once more, but now, as he says, he feels that he has grown up.

All Fall Down is a story expertly told, dramatically convincing, and comic in an odd, offbeat sort of way. As the epigraph for his novel, Herlihy uses a passage from

Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, the section telling of people who seize upon some particular truth, try to make it their truth only, and become grotesques as a result. The quotation is relevant to Herlihy's novel, for the book is, on one level, a story of grotesques. For a long time the Williamses have lived apart and according to their own concerns. It is not until they make love a shared thing that they really come alive. Also, the use of the grotesque is in keeping with the modern view that its image, anti-romantic and anti-tragic alike, provides the most effective means of expressing both the irrationality of things and the moral evil which is also the devouring, obsessive evil of modern society, the isolation of the loving and the lonely. Herlihy sees moral isolation as one of the conditions of being, but he does not make it, as some of his contemporaries have done, a reason for fury or despair. His novel ends on a note of hope.

ALL HALLOWS EVE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Charles Williams (1886-1945)

Time: October, 1945

Locale: London

First published: 1945

Principal characters:

LESTER FURNIVAL, a dead young wife

RICHARD FURNIVAL, her husband

EVELYN MERCER, her dead friend

BETTY WALLINGFORD, another friend

LADY SARA WALLINGFORD, Betty's mother

JONATHAN DRAYTON, Betty's artist fiancé

SIMON THE CLERK, the leader of a religious group

Charles Williams' last novel is set in the locale he knew best, central London, but in a time which he did not live to appreciate: the first autumn of the peace after World War II. To Lester Furnival, standing on Westminster Bridge at twilight, the lights of the city and the drone of a friendly plane overhead are symbols of the peace, a return to the natural order of life, yet Lester becomes conscious

of a silence that is unnatural. Through Lester's gradual awareness of the fact that she is dead, Williams crosses and indeed removes the barrier between the natural and the supernatural worlds. Lester is the central character in a spiritual drama which illustrates Williams' mystical and imaginative interpretation of Christian doctrine.

Fundamentally the plot traces the tri-

umph of love over evil during Lester's period of purgatory. A vital and passionate young wife killed in a completely fortuitous plane crash, she is a modern version of the figure of Beatrice, who was Williams' focus in his interpretation of Dante. Her love for her husband, which has survived her death, leads to his conversion, the defeat of evil, and her own salvation. When she first finds herself alone in the city with Evelyn, the friend who was killed with her, she realizes that theirs was never a true friendship. As the two dead women try to establish a genuine relationship in their new existence, they become involved in the affairs of the living. Lester's husband, Richard, has an artist friend, Jonathan, who is in love with Betty, a school friend whom Lester and Evelyn had never really liked. Betty is completely dominated by her mother, Lady Wallingford, who is a disciple of a mysterious faith healer who calls himself Simon the Clerk.

The action of the novel begins when Lady Wallingford and Betty call to see a portrait of Father Simon commissioned from Jonathan. Because Jonathan is a Christian, he has, without realizing it, revealed in the portrait the essence of evil which Simon represents. Lady Wallingford, infuriated, calls off Betty's engagement to Jonathan, takes Betty away, and Jonathan calls on Richard for help. The conflict between mother and lover for possession of Betty becomes, on the supernatural level, the conflict between the God of love and the power of darkness for the human soul.

The character of Simon is developed with all the resources of Williams' interest in magic and witchcraft. Surrounded by a band of zealous converts whom he has healed, preaching to a mesmerized audience in his shabby back-street headquarters, Simon is the re-embodiment of Simon the Magus, of the Jew who rejected Christ; he is, in fact, the anti-Christ. Exploiting the devotion of Lady Wallingford, he had conceived Betty to be his agent and fears that his power over

his daughter is now threatened by the human love of Jonathan. He decides that the time has come for the final magical operation which will separate her human soul from her physical body and substitute his will in its place, but he is thwarted by love in action. At each crisis he makes a mistake because his magic powers cannot perceive what love will do.

The sequence of events combines natural and supernatural elements with a realism that is not merely a matter of literary technique but an expression of Williams' belief that the material and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, are equally real. This tenet of faith was for Williams a basic fact of the creative imagination. There is no question of fantasy, allegory, or symbol; the novel form is used simply for its traditional purpose of revealing some phase of life's reality. Underlying the events is a pattern which Williams considered fundamental in human life: the power of substitution. He believed that a person who loves can bear another's burdens in a way which he considered physical as well as spiritual. This power means not simply praying for the burdened but loving so deeply that the burden of suffering is transferred from one to the other. As the human form of Christ on the cross suffered for all mankind, so the central character of this story, as of other of Williams' novels, saves a victim by substituting herself.

When Simon goes to Betty's bedroom to perform the final operation of magic, Lester is already there, having gone to ask Betty's forgiveness for rejecting her friendship. As Betty's forgiveness of Lester releases Lester's spirit, so Lester's love sustains Betty and becomes her substitute to receive Simon's curse. Because Lester is already dead, Simon has no effect on her, and Betty is released from his spell, to rebel against her mother and rejoin Jonathan. The defeated Simon then turns his attention to the wretched soul of Evelyn, who has sought his aid to regain her power of persecuting Betty as she had done at school. Lester tries to

rescue Evelyn, as she has rescued Betty, by joining her within the miserable deformed physical body which Simon creates for her with his magic powers. Simon attempts to control this body and use it to trap Betty, Jonathan, and Richard; but Lester exercises a greater control through the power of love and warns them in time for them to expose Simon and bring his work and his house to ruins.

The climax of the action takes place on a gray, rainy Halloween, All Hallows Eve, when the deformed body containing the souls of Lester and Evelyn moves through the streets of London and keeps a rendezvous at Jonathan's flat, where the engaged couple have invited the bereaved Richard to join them for dinner. The circumstances of this final encounter between the living and the dead are typical of the relationship between the material and the spiritual worlds throughout the novel. When Lester wants to warn Richard of the approach of the magical body, she thinks of the telephone. Having begged two pennies from a passerby, she goes into a telephone box opposite the Charing Cross Tube Station, a natural enough sight on the streets of London. But when Richard comes to the phone he hears Lester's voice as clearly as he has seen her form several times in the last few days. She gives him the message that they must wait at the flat until the old woman comes. Instead of going out to dinner they spread a meal of bread, cheese, cold scraps, and wine. Thus they prepare themselves for the crisis of All Hallows Eve. After they have met, the three living friends take the deformed body with them in a taxi through the rainy midnight streets of London to the darkened house where Simon and Lady Wallingford are forestalled in their last desperate act of magic.

From the moment when Lester finds herself alone on Westminster to the climax of her final disappearance from Simon's house, there is always a strong sense of London as the background to the action. At first Lester can see only the

city, but as her spirit develops she hears all the familiar noises of people and traffic, feels the pavement under her feet, smells the river and the October rain. Betty and Jonathan go together to call on her old nurse at 59 Upper Clapham Lane. There they discover that she had taken it upon herself to baptize Betty as a baby, secretly and in defiance of Lady Wallingford. The literalness of London sights and sounds and addresses is not merely a device to root the supernatural story in the natural world. For Williams, London is an image of the *Civitas Dei*, the Holy City, the community or communion of the saints. When the city is first mentioned the term indicates the ancient borough of London, site of St. Paul's and the Bank of England as well as Jonathan's flat, as distinguished from Holborn where Simon's headquarters are, or Westminster where Richard's flat is, or Highgate where the Wallingfords live. But through Lester's developing spiritual perception, the spiritual reality of the eternal city is revealed. Its identity is hinted to mortal eyes on the fateful afternoon when Lady Wallingford and Betty call to look at Jonathan's portrait of Simon. Lady Wallingford is equally antagonized by another picture which Jonathan and Richard consider the best he has done, a painting of a part of London after a raid, a scene of desolation bathed nevertheless in living light from the still unrisen sun.

This city emerging from war and night is the setting in which Richard meets his wife again with deeper understanding of their love. At the end of the novel Jonathan and Betty give Richard the picture, and Lester disappears into light. Although the action of the novel centers around the conflict over Betty, the major interest is focused on the dead Lester and the living Richard as they move through the city, at first absolutely separated, then gradually reunited as each comes to understand the reality of love, and finally separated when the understanding is complete. These two characters are de-

veloped with a psychological depth, dramatic sensitivity, and humor which make them as fully credible as the protagonists of the traditional nineteenth century novel. Jonathan and Betty are less fully delineated, seen more from the outside, through the eyes of their friends, than from the inside. The dead Evelyn is no longer a human personality but merely the epitome of the egocentric peevishness which was her dominant trait. In descending scale, Simon and Lady Walingford are mere agents of evil, as much puppets as the bodies which Simon can create. This apparent lack of consistency in characterization depends not on liter-

ary technique or point of view, but on Williams' theory of personality, his belief that only love can make a human being whole. Jonathan and Betty, in the initial stages of love before its physical consummation, cannot be as fully developed as Lester and Richard. In characterization, as in every aspect of the novel, Williams' story is perfectly integrated with his doctrine. Final assessment of his achievement requires the resolution of a basic ambiguity: whether the credibility of the story makes the doctrine convincing, or whether the credibility of the story in fact depends on conviction about the doctrine.

THE ALLEGORY OF LOVE

Type of work: Literary criticism
Author: C. S. Lewis (1886-1945)
First published: 1936

In *The Allegory of Love*, the subtitle, "A Study in Medieval Tradition," suggests something more than literary history or criticism. As Lewis traces the development of the allegorical form historically to show how it was conditioned by the general climate of opinion in the Middle Ages, he reveals an underlying theme which is his main purpose. He states that the form and sentiment of the discussed poetry has left a clearly definable trace on our minds even though it has passed away. The allegorical love poem was an easy mode of expression and if we can understand the present and possibly the future then by using the imagination of history we can possibly succeed in recreating expression of the lost state of mind created by these old poems. The basic element distinguishing the medieval from the modern mind was its intuitive recognition of myth as the essence of literature. Imaginative apprehension of this concept is necessary for understanding the relationship between past, present, and future, according to Lewis, because the pattern of history, like all great sto-

ries, is a myth whose meaning is revealed only to the imagination.

The structural argument of the book has four main divisions: (1) an analysis of the medieval ideal of courtly love; (2) an explanation of the origins of allegory as a literary form; (3) a survey of the mutations of the allegorical form as it was used in love poems; (4) an analysis of the transmutation of both form and sentiment in *The Faerie Queene*. In following this main outline, Lewis contributes to the study of medieval literature a useful synthesis of unfamiliar material and fresh assessment of the familiar. Attempting to revitalize medieval literature for the modern reader, he stresses that the Middle Ages, having more coherence than our own age, had also more vitality in the sense that art forms were derived directly from what was considered most significant in human life. The initial premise is that the form of allegorical love poetry is explicable only in terms of the tradition of courtly love.

Lewis distinguishes four main aspects of courtly love: Humility, Courtesy,

Adultery, and the Religion of Love. The code of feudal society was obviously responsible for the first two features; the third developed more subtly from the practice of strategic rather than romantic marriage alliances and from the Church's ambivalent attitude toward passion. The fourth feature had the most complex origin and the most significant bearing on love allegory. Lewis thinks that the idea of a "Religion of Love" cannot be attributed to a misunderstanding of Ovid's mock-religious love poetry; for the medieval poets' understanding of Ovid is revealed by the comparable flippancy of their own erotic poetry. Moreover, the original connection between Christianity with its worship of the Blessed Virgin, on the one hand, and the "Religion of Love," on the other, was a matter not so much of influence as of reaction, with the love poetry based on parody of the religious doctrine. But what began as parody was transformed by the high seriousness of some poets into an imaginative escape from the severities of their faith.

The subtlety of this relationship is elaborated in detailed summaries of the love poetry of Chrétien de Troyes and the love theory of Andreas Capellanus. In discussing Chrétien, Lewis stresses the difference between his early *Erec* and his masterpiece, *Launcelot*. The first is a brutal adventure tale of the Griselda story type, while the later poem is the epitome of the tradition of courtly love. Chrétien transforms the element of adventure by expressing his hero's religious emotion in terms of subjective adventure, through the medium of allegory. In contrast, Andreas Capellanus in his *De Arte Honeste Amandi* attempts to Christianize love theory by rational definition, illustrated by a delightful variety of dialogues and stories; but he recognizes the impossibility of reconciliation in a palinode which affirms that all his advice was given in order that the reader might understand but reject love. Lewis feels that his conclusion, like the similar closing passage of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, invali-

dates neither the love theory nor the religious doctrine, but subordinates the former to the latter as, in medieval thought, everything in the secular world is subordinated to eternity. Lewis stresses the fact that the relationship between the two systems, erotic and Christian, was one of infinite variation of a pattern which gave life the unity of art. This idea underlies the whole argument of the book. Life is most meaningful when it has the form of an art; and art, in turn, is most meaningful when it takes its form from life.

Lewis' analysis of the history of the allegorical method is based on the premise that the nature of thought and language is fundamentally allegorical. His purpose is an inquiry into a quality inherent in human speech which becomes as well a part of the structure of poetry in the Middle Ages. The definition of the inquiry implies the conclusion: if allegory is fundamental to the human imagination, then its structural use in imaginative literature results in a synthesis of form and content which was naturally popular in an age which appreciated synthesis.

Allegory as a mode of expression began, according to Lewis, in classical Latin poetry with the use of personification, a literary device which originated in mythology and continued in rhetoric. He traces this development as a decline from genuine *mythopoeia* or myth-making in literature. Using the *Thebaid* of Statius as a key example, Lewis reveals a pattern of recurrent loss and recovery; as the Olympians declined into mere figures of rhetoric, the figures of rhetoric acquired increasing imaginative force. This literary trend resulted from a two-fold change in the thought of the Roman world, a change of which Christianity was a supreme manifestation rather than a cause. One aspect was the development of monotheism, which explained the gods of popular religion as facets of the supreme power; and the other was what Lewis defines as an increasing personal sense of divided will and a concomitant practice of introspection. He finds in St. Augus-

tine's *Confessions* a major example of the trend toward expressing this inner conflict in metaphorical terms, which he thinks explains both the origin and the continued popularity of allegory as a literary form.

The step from metaphorical expression of inner conflict to the structural use of allegory was first taken by Prudentius in his *Psychomachia*, an inferior poem whose popularity proves to Lewis the eagerness of its readers for full-fledged allegory. The power of allegorical conflict in dealing with psychology was amply demonstrated by the successors of Prudentius. A more subtle power of allegory was gradually revealed by such diverse writers as Claudian, the bishop Ennodius, and the little-known Martianus Capella of Carthage, in whose varied works Lewis finds a common denominator: by means of allegory, the gods of mythology were preserved and the free creation or recreation of the marvelous was made possible. In ancient literature there were only two worlds, the normal world and the world of believed marvels. The use of no-longer-believed marvels as allegory provided the poet with a third world of the marvelous-known-to-be-fiction, a contribution which Lewis considers vital for the development of literature. This is the use of myth, the preservation of the marvelous once accepted as fact but capable of recovery and renewal in later periods. Such a revitalization is found in allegory. This application of loss and recovery, of myth transformed into mythology, foreshadows the history of allegory as a form. Lewis does not draw a parallel but rather reveals a different phase of the cycle: the history of medieval love allegory illustrates recovery and loss. A constant undercurrent of this argument is Lewis' theory of history as the greatest of all myths.

Although an important contribution to allegorical love poetry was made by the French philosophical poets of the twelfth century, whose use of the allegorical form to express metaphysical and theological arguments elaborated the structure and

increased the scope of allegory, the first genuine allegorical love poem was the *Romance of the Rose*, created by Guillaume de Lorris and ostensibly continued by Jean de Meun. Lewis' detailed summary of the first part stresses the poet's psychological realism and his technical achievements. The characters are all personifications of qualities of character: some belonging to the hero, some to the heroine, and some to both. The course of action in which they engage presents such a penetrating description of the experience of both parties in a complex love affair that Guillaume could be called the father of the sentimental novel. But in keeping the allegorical significance consistent, Guillaume does not sacrifice the consistency of the story at its literal level. In the second part the allegorical love story becomes distorted as the action is elaborated without any allegorical significance, or the allegory emphasized with ridiculous results in action; for Jean de Meun was interested in the love allegory merely as a framework for lengthy digressions on a variety of subjects. Both Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun make a major contribution to the development of love allegory: the former with his model of form and the latter with his encyclopedia of material for his successors.

The *Romance of the Rose* was, according to Lewis, not merely part of the background for Chaucer and Spenser but an influence on English literature second only to the Bible and Boethius from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. With the achievements of Chaucer, Gower, and Usk, which Lewis analyzes in detail, allegory became the dominant form. With its dominance Lewis also associates its decline, in two respects: its use and abuse by inferior writers and its metamorphosis by writers of genius. During the fifteenth century the allegorical form experienced both of these effects. In his discussion of the Chaucerians—Lydgate, Dunbar, Nevill, and Googe—Lewis illustrates the decline of allegory through its separation from the center of interest

of the poem and its retention as conventional decoration. Since the dominant form is most likely to attract the inferior talent and even to disguise its inferiority, the main line of influence is likely to be a descending one. The *Romance of the Rose* is an example: the inferior second part was more influential than the first part, and the incidental elements of the first part were more influential than its essence. But the dominant form may also conceal its own metamorphosis. While the love allegory was declining, the older moral or theological allegory was given fresh impetus by the attempt to retaliate against the erotic theme. In the allegories of Gavin Douglas the homiletic and erotic strands become perfectly fused and subordinated to the imaginative appeal of pure fantasy. Thus, the decline of love allegory, the loss of its original mythopoetic impulse, led ultimately to a recovery.

Lewis' analysis of the relationship of *The Faerie Queene* to this tradition reveals a complete metamorphosis. Spenser's basic form is that of the Italian romantic epic, adapted for allegorical purposes; and his treatment of love supplants the courtly tradition with the ideal of romantic marriage. Beneath the surface of the romantic epic's series of fantastic adventures are several levels of allegory. The level first apparent is not so much allegory as symbol: the knight, the lady, the dragon's mouth are not imaginary expressions of facts in the natural world but real facts which express the supernatural world. The next level is what makes *The Faerie Queene* the touchstone for Lewis' theory of mythopoeia: "the world of popular imagination: almost, a popular mythology [in] the primitive or instinctive mind." Two further levels of meaning are dismissed by Lewis as confusing to genuine criticism: the political allegory he considers an unfortunate attempt to attract Spenser's contemporaries, and the allegory of Arthur and Gloriana he considers inexplicable in its fragmentary state. He devotes major attention to the moral or philosophical allegory, which in

turn operates on several planes. Each book has an allegorical core developed by characters and events, other events that are miniature independent allegories, and some that are pure fantasy. In distinguishing between these planes, Lewis emphasizes the imaginative unity within the allegorical diversity of the poem. The conclusion about *The Faerie Queene* is two-fold: its greatness depends primarily on its likeness to life, and its historical significance as the apotheosis and the metamorphosis of the allegorical form. Its influence continues the pattern since it inspired the Romantics not as allegory but as fantasy: what is recovered is never precisely what was lost. In contrast, Spenser's transformation of the concept of love had an influence so direct that romantic marriage became a platitude in English literature.

Throughout his discussion of love allegory, Lewis' emphasis on the artistic subtlety and imaginative appeal of medieval literature leads to some provocative judgments. In analyzing an inferior talent like that of Jean de Meun, Lewis condemns the quality that many medievalists would condone, lack of unity; and he praises a quality not associated with the Middle Ages, power in describing natural beauty. The analysis which reveals Lewis' critical emphasis most clearly is that of Chaucer, whom he discusses as a poet of courtly love rather than as the eventual creator of *The Canterbury Tales*. Not only did Chaucer's contemporaries think of him as a love poet, but the major tradition of English poetry descended from the love poetry rather than from the *Tales*. Lewis presents Chaucer's main love poems, *The Book of the Duchesse*, *The Parlement of Foules*, and *The Book of Troilus*, as examples of the varied influence of the *Romance of the Rose*. The first has the elements of dream vision, garden setting, and courtly love theme, but no allegory. *The Parlement* has similar framework devices with personifications which suggest specific topical allegory but in fact celebrate the general conceit of courtly

love. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer has translated the psychological intricacies of the *Romance of the Rose* from allegory into literal story, and has transformed Boccaccio's Renaissance story into a medieval poem. Not only do the events conform to courtly love traditions, but the style is uniformly medieval, with rhetorical ornamentation and metaphysical digressions which give the heightened impact of unity in diversity. The ideal of courtly love makes the story theoretically consistent as well as psychologically sound, affording that unity which satisfies a basic need of the imagination. Lewis claims that unity of interest is neither classical nor foreign to any form of art. When the medieval work lacked such unity, the reason was not the fact that it belonged to the Middle Ages but that it failed as a work of art, possibly because the writer worked on a design too vast for his resources and ability. As Lewis points out, the artist succeeded best when he

worked on a modest scale, as in the case of *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight* or in parish churches of Norman French design, or when his resources were equal to his plan, as in the *Divine Comedy* or in Salisbury Cathedral, where design and detail are in proper proportion.

Lewis' two themes, the development of medieval love allegory and the understanding of ourselves are united in his conclusion that great literature moves to its own rhythm, neither slowed nor hurried by literature that exists on a lower level. Thus, Spenser's true position is now apparent, centuries after his own time, as the mediator between medieval and modern poetry: too complete a Renaissance might have proved a catastrophe for art. Lewis has achieved his purpose in *The Allegory of Love* if the reviewer was right who said that it is impossible to read this book without viewing all literature in a new and different light.

AN ALMANAC FOR MODERNS

Type of work: Essays on Nature arranged by days and seasons

Author: Donald Culross Peattie (1898-)

First published: 1935

An Almanac for Moderns is a collection of essays on Nature entered journal-fashion, one for each day of the year. Some of the essays are complete on a single page, while others run on for several pages. At the time the book was being written, Peattie was living in Illinois, at the childhood home of his wife. Like Gilbert White, he has written a natural history of his own American Selborne, but unlike White, he observes Nature with the eye of a trained scientist, bringing into his book the accumulated scientific knowledge of the twentieth century. It is for this reason that the book is an almanac "for Moderns." Modern science has answered many questions since White's time and—what is more important—it has provoked more questions than it has answered, questions which

could not possibly have occurred to the serene, clerical mind of Gilbert White.

The almanac is filled with descriptions of local plants and animals, with now and then a glance at the stars and planets. Although Peattie has a naturalist's eye for all living things, his observations on plants, birds, insects, and amphibians seem to outnumber all the others. Each description is a gem of scientific accuracy plus poetic insight. Epithets and similes abound: "that tombstone world," the moon; the "cold batrachian jelly" which unites us with the amphibians; the "silky, silvery and perpetually talkative needles" of the white pine; the "click of a seed in a weatherbeaten pod," describing the song of the chickadee; a "turret of inflorescence," the goldenrod; the song of the grackles, like "the uncertain, ragged voice

of a boy"; *Equisetum*, "like some wizened ancient race of men whose stature is cretin, whose language is cryptic"; ants, "the mankind of insects"; the *Compositae*, "a city . . . of little florets . . . enclosed within leaflike walls"; the "goblin flight" of bats, "seemingly so drunken."

The almanac is not devoted to plants and animals exclusively. It also abounds with thumbnail biographies of naturalists, whose birthdays are thoughtfully observed on the calendar of days. Great names like Darwin, Lamarck, Pasteur, Audubon, Linnaeus, Thoreau, von Humboldt and Goethe appear with less-known names like Fabre, Wilson, Huber, Forel, Hudson, Rafinesque, de Vries, Nuttall, Reaumur, Michaux, and even Johnny Appleseed. These biographies add zest and human interest to the almanac.

About the only resemblance between Peattie's almanac and the conventional drugstore variety is that it is organized according to the signs of the Zodiac. The first entry is made on March 21, the vernal equinox, in the sign of Aries, the Ram; the last, on March 20 of the following year, in Pisces, the Fishes. Spring is covered in the first ninety-eight pages of the book, from March 21 to June 20; summer, in the next 101 pages, from June 21, the summer solstice, in Cancer, the Crab, to September 21, in Virgo, the Virgin; autumn, in the next hundred pages, from September 22, the autumnal equinox, in Libra, the Scales, to December 21, in Sagittarius, the Archer; and winter, in the last ninety-seven pages, from December 22, the winter solstice, in Capricornus, the Goat, to March 20, in Pisces, the Fishes. Thus the year begins and ends with spring, the season of universal regeneration.

Although the nature lover will enjoy Peattie's descriptions of plants and animals, the historian his thumbnail biographies, and the astrologer his zodiacal arrangement, what makes the book unique is its natural philosophy, based on direct observation of "those obstinate question-

ings of sense and outward things," as Wordsworth expressed it. Peattie is one of those rare beings who combine poetry with science, and science with philosophy. As a rule, the scientist is interested in discovering and classifying cold facts which lead to workable hypotheses. He must depend upon accurate observation devoid of all human emotion. As W.I.B. Beveridge comments, in *The Art of Scientific Observation*, purists contend that scientists should ask "how" but never "why," lest they be misled into the teleological view that an intelligent purpose, embodied in a supernatural agency, directs all life. The poet, on the other hand, is generally untrammelled by any passion for direct observations and cold facts. He prefers "why" to "how," and sees all Nature through a veil of human emotions. Peattie combines both viewpoints.

Even Wordsworth, who observed more Nature than most, ignored petal and sepal, pistil and stamen, to elevate the lowly primrose into a symbol of the universal spirit pervading all living things. But Peattie demonstrates throughout *An Almanac for Moderns* that even pistils and stamens may arouse a sense of wonder in the observer, and may evoke questions which neither the scientist nor the theologian can satisfactorily answer. The sense of wonder is aroused in Peattie, not by meditations on death and the hereafter, not by the arcane messages of Revelation, but by the mysteries of life here on the planet Earth. Nothing in Nature is insignificant. The slime mold, for example, naked, unwallled protoplasm, mindless, senseless, formless, and yet a living something, may symbolize the mystery of life as well as man himself.

Peattie finds beauty and wonder in all of Nature. Being both scientist and poet, he can find manifestations of beauty which neither can find alone. Beauty is something that impresses our senses as pleasant and exciting. It cannot be measured in the laboratory, nor can it be explained as the gift of some benign super-

natural being. Does it serve a useful purpose? Darwin thought so and proposed the idea of sexual selection. The colors and songs of birds, the hues and scents of flowers, attracted mates, insured reproduction, the loveliest colors and scents attracting superior mates and thus perpetuating beauty. The theologian, on the other hand, proclaims that beauty's only purpose is to glorify God. Characteristically, Peattie agrees with neither. Beauty is "excessiveness, superabundance, random ebullience, and sheer delightful waste to be enjoyed in its own high right." Neither does sex need the justification of purpose. Nature has demonstrated time and again that sex is unnecessary for reproduction; it is neither more, nor less, than a part of life's enrichment, to be accepted with a sense of its worth and reverence for its beauty.

Life itself, in all its limitless, bewildering variety, must be the religion of the naturalist. How and where did it originate? Three explanations have occurred to the mind of man: (1) special creation by an omnipotent Providence; (2) transportation, in the form of spores or bacteria, from another world; or (3) spontaneous generation in ancient seas or freshwater ponds. Peattie believes that all three hypotheses evoke more questions than they answer. Philosophy is needed to synthesize all that science has learned about life—not the old, outworn, outdated philosophy of the past, but a new philosophy based upon the observations of science. Evolution is a unifying force in life, but not necessarily Darwin's sur-

vival of the fittest. Perhaps there is something, after all, in Lamarck's inheritance of acquired characteristics.

Vitalist, mechanist, and supernaturalist are unable to explain life in its entirety. Teleologists, who find a deep, underlying purpose in life; new believers in the Great Design, a return to Aristotelian cosmology, all leave Peattie unimpressed because predeterminism does not allow deep investigation. Man is not a special creation, but the product of long evolution through eons of time, part and parcel of life right here on earth.

In his attitude toward religion Peattie describes himself as a kind of pantheist, but not a druid, worshiping oaks, or a Hindu, idolizing animals. He does not like catchwords or credos to repeat by rote, but he does like the historical or evolving view of biology because it does not lead to self-satisfaction, but only to more questions. Science is a ship afloat in a great sea. Those on board know less than Columbus did; they do not know where they sailed from or where they are going. The landlubber on board is terrified by this uncertainty. He can survive only by visualizing a safe harbor ahead. But the tough-minded (Henry James's word for the stout of heart) glory in the quest. The naturalist loves and accepts all life and stands in awe before its multitudinous diversities and its countless mysteries. A degree of certainty may come only through the slow, careful probings of science. Meanwhile, the naturalist must keep an open mind.

THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH

Type of work: Political and social survey

Author: James Bryce (1838-1922)

First published: 1888; 1910

James Bryce served in several capacities which qualified and trained him to write on American political and social institutions. A professor of history at Ox-

ford and a member of Parliament, he also served in numerous political posts, and was ambassador to the United States from 1907 to 1913. His monumental

work, *The American Commonwealth*, grew out of five visits to the United States and extensive reading about this country.

The American Commonwealth is a shrewd analytical study of the American scene designed for a European audience and obviously written by a man who was prejudiced in favor of America. He felt that regardless of the many flaws and weaknesses in American institutions and the political system, especially on the local and state levels, the sum total of American hopes and aspirations had created a system of rule which was the best to that time and the type that offered hope to the world.

This study is divided into six parts. The first concerns the national government, the Constitution, the Presidency, the two houses of Congress, the Federal courts, the Federal system of government, and the relations of the Federal government with the state governments.

Bryce emphasizes the organic growth of the American political system. He believes that the happy combination of events and of thinking which resulted in this system, especially in the Constitution, grew simply out of the fact that the predominant race in America in the eighteenth century was Anglo-American. This race was directly responsible for the Constitution and the fact that, although it is by no means a perfect instrument, it merits the veneration that Americans generally bestow on it. Bryce feels that the greatness of the Constitution derives from the fact that there is nothing new about it, that like all good political documents, all things that deserve to win and hold the obedience and respect of men, it has its roots deeply planted in the past and grew slowly through changing periods of history. The men who drew up the Constitution were practical politicians who wanted to walk the paths trod by former successful governments. This path was made easy, and its progress assured, by the fact that in America during those days there were no reactionary conspira-

tors threatening the nation, for everybody loved liberty and equality. The most remarkable feature of the American governmental system, Bryce felt, is the pre-eminence of the Constitution and the fact that the Constitution can be altered only by the people.

The creation of a president to head the American government was fortuitous. In outlining his role and power the framers of the Constitution, fearing the monarchical system and a strong centralized government, nevertheless modified existing offices of leaders; that is, they created the office as one that enlarged the role of the state governor, whose office resembled that of the British king, but on a smaller and improved scale. There are numerous disadvantages to this office and the method of electing its holder, but in practice the American president has succeeded better than perhaps he had a right to expect. The responsibility of the position and the realization that the president represents the nation as a whole have sobered and controlled the office of the presidency. With a few exceptions the presidency has not been filled by men of brilliance. However, the office does not demand intellectual brilliance. Instead, only common sense and honesty are needed.

In fact, the political offices in America are not filled by outstanding citizens; few such men take up a career in politics. Even the Senate and the House of Representatives are not constituted of the nation's best minds. The Senate, however, has drawn to itself the best talent in politics and in its dignity and six-year tenure in office has established its authority in the American political system. It faithfully fulfills the intentions of the founders of the nation in resisting change and yielding to it only gradually.

In comparison to the Senate, the House of Representatives seems a bedlam. The House lacks the dignity and the power of the upper chamber. It also lacks the men of ability claimed by its superior half. But what it lacks in these aspects it

makes up for in the worthiness of its purpose and, after all, its real accomplishment.

Those who drafted and signed the American Constitution were especially wise in establishing the complex legal institutions that they drew up. Bryce felt that few American institutions deserved closer study than the intricate system of the judiciary. These institutions deserve great admiration because they operate smoothly and have contributed pointedly to the peace and prosperity of America. The weaknesses in the American legal system, in fact, flow not from their makeup but from human frailties.

The second part of *The American Commonwealth* does for the state and local governments what the first part does for the national government. Like the earlier section, it is a shrewd analysis. The state constitution, like the Federal one, is old. It formed the basis for the instrument written up for the nation as a whole. The state constitutions in general grew out of the Royal Charters, but in being changed and rewritten they cast out the worse aspects of their models. A state constitution is a law passed directly by the people at the polls and is consequently an example of popular sovereignty directly exercised, with few parallels in modern Europe. State governments are more subject to local pressures than is the Federal government, and they are more widely swung by political parties. Some of the weaknesses of the state governments are exaggerated in more local groupings, especially in city governments.

Thus, the American city has much that is blameworthy but also much that is praiseworthy. Universal suffrage has many serious weaknesses, and all become evident and important in a city, where foreign immigrants have swollen the population. Though there are obviously serious problems in the American city, probably no other system of government could have been devised that would have worked as well; and American cities have made progress in solving their problems.

Part Three of this work concerns itself with "Political Methods and Physical Influences." It is a detailed study of the American political machinery, nominating conventions, and public opinion and its power in the United States. Bryce considers that of all American experiments in politics the most worthy of serious study is this governing by public opinion, which towers above all other aspects of American political life as a source of power. Yet this power is used well. Individuals are reckless, but the mass of people are restrained. As a result, public opinion becomes gradually more temperate, mellow, and tolerant.

The very size, strength, and potential of the United States give Bryce great pause for contemplation. Can a nation so immense in size, so varied in population, and with such immense wealth remain one nation and control itself? With his tentative and conservative disposition Bryce hesitates to answer his own questions. But his conclusions almost assert themselves, and his prophecies are somewhat optimistic. Never before has a nation had such golden opportunities, as he sees them, for defensive strength and material prosperity. He concludes that the nation will probably remain unified in government and still more probably united in speech, character, ideas, and action.

In all aspects *The American Commonwealth* is exhaustive. One of the great strengths of the book derives from the background of its author. Deeply read in European and other governments, he gives his study of the American government an unusual breadth and depth which informs the reader profoundly. Thus, his book becomes essentially a study in comparative governments. As such, it is as informative today as at the time of composition. Only in the study of some of the detailed aspects of American government is the work dated, but only because the institutions he describes, or aspects of those institutions, have been changed by custom, by act of legislature, or by amendment. Always, his comments

on the American character and his belief that America is the nation pointing to-

ward the future constitute stimulating and interesting reading.

THE AMERICAN NOTEBOOKS

Type of work: Journals

Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

First published: 1868; 1932

The American Notebooks was first published by Hawthorne's wife, Sophia, as *Passages from the American Notebooks*, in 1868. This, however, was a bowdlerized version. Mrs. Hawthorne omitted many portions which shed important light on Hawthorne's character, and she revised the manuscripts to the extent that her version misrepresented her husband's genius. Besides making grammatical changes, Sophia prudishly altered passages to make her husband appear more genteel, austere, and circumspect than he was. She deleted passages in which Hawthorne was cynical or pessimistic, and she struck out those which revealed his indolence or which spoke of his affection for such pleasures as good cigars and drink. Above all, she created an image of her husband as a withdrawn, pensive isolationist. This picture is alarmingly erroneous.

In 1932, the late Professor Randall Stewart published the authentic version of *The American Notebooks*. Using modern editorial methods and applying his own astute scholarly insight, Stewart was able to distinguish Hawthorne's original wording from Sophia's emendations. The result of this work, along with his later biography of Hawthorne and his edition of *The English Notebooks*, was to correct the image perpetuated by Sophia and subsequent Victorian critics and biographers.

To introduce the text of the journals, Stewart has contributed a valuable introduction. He first discusses Mrs. Hawthorne's revisions of the journals, then devotes a chapter to the adaptation of material from the journals in Hawthorne's fiction. He first points out that

Hawthorne's motives in keeping a journal were "professional." Here was the storehouse of raw materials to be used in his creative writing. From his notebook entries, Hawthorne gleaned ideas for stories, details of background, character, and event for his fiction, material for illustration and amplification, and subjects for essays. His journal entries were exhaustive; he noted every little detail of what he saw, recording it for possible use in future writings. Hawthorne never literally copied from the journals, however, in composing a story or novel; journal entries were always reshaped and often combined by his creative imagination. A fictional character, for example, might be a composite of several actual personages who appear in the notebooks.

Stewart's now famous classification of recurrent character types in Hawthorne's fiction is the subject of Chapter III. He shows that Hawthorne's characters are scholar-idealists, persons tormented by hidden guilt, reformers, decrepit old men, or one of three kinds of villains. Heroines in Hawthorne's fiction are of three types: the wholesome, New England girl who is intelligent, independent, and sensible (Phoebe Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables*, for example); the frail, almost ethereal creature subservient to stronger personalities (Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*); and the sensuous, exotic woman (Beatrice in "Rappaccini's Daughter" and Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*).

A chapter on the major themes of Hawthorne's fiction concludes Stewart's introductory remarks. He demonstrates Hawthorne's preoccupation with only a few basic themes which recur throughout

his writings. Although many variations of these themes were explored, the four basic ones remain (1) the isolation of the individual from humanity, (2) the problem of sin, (3) the injurious influence of the past on the present, and (4) the condition of earthly immortality made possible by an elixir of life. If any of these predominates, it is that of isolation. Whether through too much attention to intellect, a restless quest for something in life, a desire to probe into the heart of another, or extreme religious devotion, isolationists are plentiful in Hawthorne's tales and novels. Hawthorne sensed the danger of severing one's relations with the human family. The isolationists he creates almost always suffer in some way because of their alienation from mankind.

The notebooks themselves comprise five manuscript volumes. Some sixty-nine pages, which cover the years 1835 to 1840 and which were printed in Mrs. Hawthorne's *Passages from the American Note-Books*, are not included because the manuscript is no longer extant. Stewart refers to material in this section, however, in his copious notes.

The first manuscript volume spans the period from July, 1837, to September, 1838. The first notations were made at Augusta, Maine, where Hawthorne had journeyed during the summer of 1837 to visit his close friend Horatio Bridge. He tells of his fishing trips with Bridge and gives elaborate descriptions of the natural surroundings of the area. His attention to detail, especially to particulars of nature, soon proved essential to formulating background or symbolic material in his fiction. His descriptions of the natural surroundings of North Adams, Massachusetts, where he sojourned during the summer of 1838, provided the basis for the setting in "Ethan Brand." North Adams is in the rugged Berkshires, mountains which made an indelible impression on Hawthorne's vivid imagination. A moonlight walk he took into the outskirts of the village where the solitary

limekilns dotted the wild countryside, planted the germinal idea for the setting of the story. In "Ethan Brand" he uses the dark, gloomy terrain of the area to symbolize the desolation surrounding the crazed Brand.

Volume I of the journals also reveals a Hawthorne who was not estranged from the world around him. The portrait presented is not that of a scholar-recluse. True, he spent much time studying and writing in relative seclusion, but he also visited friends, took summer excursions, and made many new acquaintances. All of these activities are faithfully recorded in this first journal.

The second volume, which runs from September, 1841, to May, 1842, begins with notations Hawthorne made while at Brook Farm, where he lived from April to November, 1841. Many of his observations were later used in *The Blithedale Romance*, the fictional account of the Brook Farm experiment. For example, a picnic and a dance of masqueraders in the woods become the prototype for a scene in *The Blithedale Romance*. A young seamstress at the boarding house is transformed into Priscilla of that novel.

The remainder of this volume offers high points of Hawthorne's observations up through the time he lived in Lenox, where he wrote *The House of the Seven Gables*, to his days at West Newton, where he published *The Blithedale Romance* and *A Wonder Book*. Again, many recordings form ideas or bases for later fiction. "Egotism; or, The Bosom Serpent" and "Browne's Folly" are only two of the stories whose sources are found in this volume. Several incidents and symbols in both *The Blithedale Romance* and *The House of the Seven Gables* have their origin here, and the natural surroundings of Lenox supplied much of the natural description Hawthorne later used in *A Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*.

Volume III, often referred to as "The Old Manse Journal," covers the time between August, 1842, and October, 1843.

This is the richest and most personal of all the manuscripts. The journal takes up shortly after Hawthorne and Sophia were married and had moved into the Old Manse. The account is ecstatic. Hawthorne had assumed a domestic role in his life for the first time. He was deeply in love with his wife; he was enchanted with the idea of marriage itself, feeling that now at last he had a home of his own of which he was head. Losing his taste for the wilds of the Berkshires, he came to love the domesticated nature surrounding Concord. He had a garden there and, as he worked it, could feel something of "the original Adam" developing within him. He tended an orchard also and saw in the domestic character of his beloved apple trees a symbol of man's close relationship with nature.

"The Old Manse Journal" reveals important sources for Hawthorne's fiction and introduces several illustrious personages who became his acquaintances. His love for the spring in Concord prompted the sketch "Buds and Bird Voices." His fascination with the mysterious old house and its profuse natural surroundings evoked his essay "The Old Manse." Nearby lived Emerson, Ellery Channing, and Thoreau. With the latter, Hawthorne was especially close and visited him at his hut on Walden Pond. This period at the Old Manse, in short, was a very formative and profitable one for Hawthorne the man and the artist.

The fourth volume, recorded between 1847 and 1851, is distinctive because it is devoted almost exclusively to an account of Hawthorne's children, Una, Julian, and Rose. The children never ceased to fascinate Hawthorne. He marveled at the differences among them, especially between the two oldest children, Una and Julian. Julian was full of human warmth and possessed a lively sense of humor; Una, however, was somber and had a tempestuous disposition. Her unpredict-

able actions and frames of mind caused Hawthorne to wonder at times what sort of creature she was, a reflection that led to the creation of the enigmatic Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*.

The whole of this fourth volume discloses more than ever a humanized Hawthorne, the man who loved his children and who liked to sit for hours observing them or playing with them. One of the most revealing glimpses of Hawthorne's sympathetic nature is that afforded in the account of the twenty days he spent alone with Julian and the pet rabbit in Lenox in 1851. When Julian was not tugging at Hawthorne's heartstrings, "Bunny" was.

Compared to the two preceding manuscripts, Volume V, covering the years 1850 to 1853, is anticlimactic. There are further notations which become ideas for stories and novels, but lacking are the warmth and human insight of Volumes III and IV. Not to be overlooked, however, are several significant passages which were later used in *The Blithedale Romance* and *The House of the Seven Gables*.

In summary, *The American Notebooks*, as edited by Randall Stewart, is a highly important work on and by Hawthorne. Professor Stewart's lengthy introduction is invaluable for its insights into the textual problem of the journals and into Hawthorne's themes, characterizations, and uses of the journals in his writings. The text itself reveals a Hawthorne who is more human, more sociable, more real than the Victorian stereotype of him. Above all, it opens Hawthorne's workshop to us. We see the materials he had to work with and observe long-range plans taking shape. Although observations relating to setting, character, incident, or symbol were transformed by the author's creative imagination, the notebooks contain the basic materials for such creativity.

AMERICA'S COMING-OF-AGE

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: Van Wyck Brooks (1886-1963)

First published: 1915

Virtually from the beginning of the American republic our writers have uttered a consistent complaint and issued a consistent call. They have complained of the inhospitable atmosphere of American life to literary creativity, and they have called for a national literature equal to the country's great material accomplishments.

Thus in the year after Emerson had declared in "The American Scholar" that the time was ripe for us to establish our cultural independence from Europe, James Fenimore Cooper in *The American Democrat* spoke harshly of the repressive effects of the democratic system upon men of superior ability and individualistic bent. A dozen years later Herman Melville, tempted to satisfy his public's desire for more South Sea adventure tales but impelled by his genius toward the darkly symbolic, unpopular, and epic, wrote in a letter to Hawthorne, "Dollars damn me." And in 1879 Henry James, soon to become a permanent expatriate, wondered in his book on Hawthorne how that writer had cultivated so rich a talent on so thin a cultural soil as the United States.

Walt Whitman, however, thought of America as itself the greatest poem of all, and in his poetry, his prefaces to the several editions of *Leaves of Grass*, and his essays he prophesied a national literature created by a new breed of poet-prophets the like of which the world had never known. As the century closed William Dean Howells expressed a similar, if subdued, optimism for the future of American literature.

Therefore Van Wyck Brooks' *America's Coming-of-Age*, which in 1915 seemed a radical and revolutionary treatise can be viewed in retrospect as but one of a series of pronouncements on a

vital but hardly unexplored subject. Yet because of its own quality and pertinence, and because it came at exactly the right cultural moment, it had tremendous impact upon its time and has continued to influence a phase of our literary thought. In length not much more than an extended essay, *America's Coming-of-Age* undertakes no less a task than the analysis of the ailing condition of American civilization, the specific diagnosis of its ills, and the etiology of the disease. Operating by means of perceptive surmise, shrewd inference, and brilliant deductive leaps rather than by careful, reasoned argument based on amassed evidence, *America's Coming-of-Age* carries the reader along on the movement of its emotional force and rhetorical eloquence. The technique is reminiscent of that used by Marx and Freud, wherein manifest logical flaws in the various parts are overcome by the weight and sense of revealed truth in the whole.

At first reading and to many of its contemporaries, *America's Coming-of-Age* appeared to be a stern denunciation of the United States, its civilization, and its accomplishments. Yet beneath the book's sharply critical, even abrasive tone, one hears the urgent and hortatory voice of a youthful idealism and optimism which has been disappointed but not destroyed. In effect, it conjoins the bitterness of the complaints made by Cooper, Melville, and James, with the stirring affirmation of the call sent out by Emerson, Whitman, and Howells.

As has been pointed out, the essential motivation behind *America's Coming-of-Age*, a motivation impelling much of Brooks' work during his long and distinguished career, was the ambition to merge art and life, to effect a synthesis between culture and society. As Brooks

begins by declaring, and as his book declares throughout, America's failure to achieve this synthesis has blighted its culture. Our culture, he avers, splits in two, divided between the "highbrow" and the "lowbrow": on the one side the ideal, the theoretical, the intellectual, the artistic; on the other the mundane, practical, philistine, commercial. This dichotomy originated in the Puritan theocracy, which erected a rigid barrier between divine and earthly realms, was embodied during the nation's formative years in the contrasting figures of Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, and was passed down through them. The result, Brooks claims, is a civilization located around the polarities of a detached and dessicated "culture" and a mindless, money-grubbing activism. Without contact with life, the intellectual risks dehumanization; without culture, the businessman is confined to mere earning and spending.

With the exception of Whitman, who alone of American writers merged the two halves of our civilization—combining in his work a great personal talent with intense social engagement—Brooks finds all our major writers wanting in some vital aspect. His common charge against them is remoteness from life, the inability or unwillingness to portray American social reality and, by portraying it, to change it. Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and Longfellow succeeded only in being decorative and/or pious. The rare talents of Poe and Hawthorne were restricted to the creation of their own special, private worlds. The Transcendentalists, led by Emerson, spoke *about* society and experience but only further emphasized the existing schism between the spiritual and material. Ultimately Emerson's writing assumed the likeness and function of the baccalaureate sermon: both, simultaneously, beautiful and remote. Lowell's large gifts fell short of fruition because he lacked both passion and sufficiently strong original ideas. Even Whitman was at last too affirmative to drive America forward, leaving us only with a rough map

for progress. As a consequence, business continues to absorb the best American talent and we have formed as a national ideal that of the "inspired millionaire."

In contrast, Brooks concludes, European civilization has been profoundly affected by such men as Heine, Nietzsche, Arnold, Morris, and Wells, who confronted their nations with distinct sociocultural issues and alternatives. Although the personality of a people is formed, defined, and enriched by these confrontations, none such have occurred in America. The intellectual's chief duty is therefore to formulate crucial issues and force them upon the nation's attention. Only in this way can a merger be made between the two equally sterile modes of life: the "highbrow," the acquisition of culture, and the "lowbrow," the acquisition of money.

Letters and Leadership and "The Literary Life in America" reiterated and amplified what Brooks had said in *America's Coming-of-Age*. The separate works were collected and published in 1934 under the title *Three Essays on America*. Although the later essays continued to insist upon the poverty of American literature and culture, Brooks made these significant new points:

1. He broadened his view of the dominant forces in American civilization to include the pioneering experience. Because the pioneering life wholly emphasized material achievement, it completely repressed the spiritual and reflective element which might have produced a viable body of art and literature.

2. He argued that because the intellectual and practical life are so completely divorced in America, we can welcome the most radical foreign writers, such as Ibsen or Nietzsche, without absorbing them or being much affected by them. We make them "mere literature."

3. He complained that in contrast to such European critics as Lessing and Sainte-Beuve, the most influential American critics—More, Babbitt, Brownell, Woodberry—are persistent in their dis-

taste for any literature which grapples with life and real experience. The sociologists and philosophers like Dewey and James, who might have replaced the literary critics as "our awakeners," lack the necessary poetic vision, the inspiring sense of the ideal.

4. He declared that the impotence of American literature of the past fifty years indicates the deeper malady of the whole culture, a malady reflected by the arrested or blighted careers of some of our most promising writers: Twain, London, Bierce, Adams. Nor does the work of more recent writers, Dreiser, Frost, Robinson, and Masters, able but drenched with morbidity, offer much hope. We need and await a school of strong-willed, affirmative writers to lead us out of our cultural wilderness.

Literary historians are unanimous in regarding *America's Coming-of-Age* as among the crucial documents of its time. It became the most important statement of the liberal position in literary criticism and a rallying point for the younger generation of disaffected intellectuals. Others took their impetus from it, and with the death of his close friend Randolph Bourne, Brooks became chief spokesman for a group of sociocultural critics that included Waldo Frank, Paul Rosenfeld, Lewis Mumford, and Matthew Josephson. They spoke through such magazines as *The Seven Arts*, *The Freeman*, and *The New Republic*. H. L. Mencken carried on the same conflict against Puritanism and philistinism, although on his own front and with his own weapons, while the issues which Brooks had joined in *America's Coming-of-Age* were explored with unrelenting thoroughness and unrelieved grimness in Harold Stearns's influential symposium *Civilization in the United States*. In one sense much of the writing of the 1920's, a decade unsurpassed in America in its creative richness, can be viewed as a dramatization of the ideas in Stearns's volume, and before it, Brooks'.

No doubt the work of Van Wyck Brooks also left its mark on a number of the most eminent literary critics who emerged during the 1920's and 1930's: V. L. Parrington, T. K. Whipple, V. F. Calverton, Granville Hicks, and F. O. Matthiessen in his early phase. Indeed, according to Bernard De Voto, Van Wyck Brooks not only influenced the literature of the 1920's and our thinking about it more than any other man, but is also the prime source of what De Voto terms "the literary fallacy," the belief that a culture can be measured by its literature.

Much of Brooks' long later career can be interpreted as having its roots in *America's Coming-of-Age*. Certainly his two other most controversial works of the period, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* and *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* derive from it. Fusing sociocultural analysis and insights borrowed from depth psychology, Brooks attempted to demonstrate in the first book how the career of a potentially great writer had been stunted by his repressive environment, and in the second how another promising artist had fled to avoid the debasement of his talent only to find himself deprived by the loss of contact with the homeland.

Although Brooks has been severely attacked for what in his later work appears to be a retreat from the extreme but provocative positions taken in *America's Coming-of-Age* and the books on Twain and James, he himself insisted in *The Opinions of Oliver Allston* and *The Writer in America* that his idealism was as strong as ever, but that he preferred to give it more positive expression. Thus in the five volumes of his "Makers and Finders" series, beginning with *The Flowering of New England* in 1936, Brooks tried with considerable success to provide the nation with that very commodity he had long before found lacking, in his own words "a usable past." There is perhaps basis for the charge of inconsistency and reaction, but it can also

justly be said of Brooks that he is one of the few American critics of the twentieth century who created a body of work of

his own which in some measure fulfills the demands he had made upon others.

AMORES

Type of work: Didactic-erotic poetry

Author: Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 B.C.-A.D. 18)

First transcribed: c. 20 B.C.

The three books of the *Amores*, the *Loves*, record the progress of a love affair in imperial Rome between the poet Ovid and his lady, Corinna. Each book is made up of short poems in the Latin elegiac distich form. An elegant and elaborate game of seduction and secret love is set out in detail, in a tone both impertinent and sly. In relating his own woes and triumphs in love, Ovid is satirizing the amatory manners of Roman society.

There is a chronological pattern in the poems. Book I begins when the poet, prepared to sing of heroic deeds, arms and war, was struck by Cupid's arrow suddenly. He turns to the poetry of love. The cycle begins: Ovid is tossing sleepless at night, enthralled by love and suffering. He prays that the lady will favor him; he in return will immortalize her in verse. We then come down to more practical matters, in a monologue addressed to the lady and explaining how at a party she can dupe her husband and send signals to Ovid.

The first assignation of the lovers, on a sultry summer afternoon, is described. By contrast, there follows a sorrowful complaint as the poet spends a long solitary night outside the locked door of Corinna's house. One poem is devoted to his guilt and remorse for a moment of anger in which he disheveled her hair. Next is his report of a conversation he overheard between Corinna and Dipsas, a bawdy old hag who gives the lady cynical advice on milking her lovers of gold and gifts. After this, the poet scolds his lady for her cupidity, tries to persuade her that love can only be given, never sold. Two

poems tell of a letter he sends to her, in high hopes of a meeting, and his despair when it is returned with a refusal.

But he is not always disappointed. In the next poem, the lovers have spent a night together, and the poet complains of the inexorable coming of day, when they must part. A crisis is recorded: from too-frequent applications of the curling iron, Corinna's hair falls out. Ovid chides and commiserates with her. The last poem of Book I reasserts the essential value of his poetry; it will be an immortal monument to his love.

Book II continues to tell of the progress of the love affair. Opening with a stout denial that he would be a better poet if he tried more serious subjects, Ovid swings into a harangue to Corinna's guard, about how easy and profitable he might find it to smuggle Ovid past the door and into her house. A similar plea is made to her eunuch. A change of mood occasions a poem of jaunty boasting about his ability to love any girl in town; but as if for punishment, the next poem relates his agonies when he suspects a rival.

Accused of dallying with Corinna's slave girl, Ovid denies the charge vehemently, with injured dignity, and in the next poem chides the slave for having blushed at the accusation and proved it true. A general complaint to Cupid comes next, on the theme that love is hell, but heaven too. Ovid boasts to a friend of his great capacity for love-making; he hopes he may die in bed.

When Corinna goes on a voyage, Ovid bemoans their separation, charges the

seas to be calm, the winds favorable, the trip safe and short. A short triumphant poem tells of another successful meeting of the lovers. But immediately following are two in a different tone: Corinna had performed an abortion on herself and endangered her life, and Ovid is shocked and worried. She recovers and he gives her a ring as a love-token.

Another separation occurs. Ovid, visiting his native village, Sulmo, misses Corinna deeply. There is a poem addressed to Macer, a poet who writes of tragic subjects. Ovid explains how hard it is to write seriously when Cupid laughs and the ladies distract him. In poetry, he predicts, love will triumph over war. The last poem of Book II is advice to Corinna's husband during an imagined meeting. Since forbidden fruits are sweetest, Ovid would have the husband be jealous and watchful of his wife, to make his cuckolding more satisfying.

Book III is less predominantly optimistic, for by now the affair is on the wane. The muse of tragedy calls to Ovid for a great work, but he asks for a short delay while he finishes his *Loves*. An afternoon at a racetrack is the first incident of this book. In the next poem, Ovid discovers that Corinna's vows of love have been broken. He is bitter and blames himself for ever having believed her protestations. At last he decides to let her lie if she must, but let her not swear false vows by his eyes.

Another poem to the husband appears, pointing out how silly it is to set guards on his wife: the faithful wife does not need them and the unfaithful wife will always find ways to get around them. Next is an account of a dream Ovid had,

of a bull deserted by a heifer. A seer interprets this as a forecast that Corinna will leave Ovid. But he is still eager for her. En route to visit her, he is blocked by a flood-swollen stream which he curses and rages at in his thwarted desire.

Matters continue to go wrong: once with her, he finds, ironically, that he is impotent, and he rages even more mightily at himself. The lady is furious, thinking he has worn himself out with other women. She smiles on a new lover and Ovid, neglected, is left to wonder how she could prefer a parvenu and a soldier to him, a great poet.

The following poem is in a more serious tone. It is a funeral elegy on the death of a poet-friend, Tibullus. Next comes a poem in autumnal mood in praise of Ceres, goddess of the harvest, and of lament for his unhappy love affair. Ovid tries to renounce his love for the false Corinna, but unsuccessfully. She is too beautiful, and he must love her even against her will. Wryly he realizes that it was his celebration of Corinna in poetry that spread her fame and attracted other men to her. However, he says, they should have known he exaggerated, and that she could not be as perfect as he had painted her.

In a last confrontation with his cruel lady, Ovid begs her at least to pretend she still loves him, even though he knows she is deceiving him. Let her deny that she strays, so that he may continue to convince himself that she loves him. In the last poem Ovid announces that he has given up writing love poetry; he is now ready to turn to a grave and serious subject; but he hopes that all his writing will endure and immortalize him.

AREOPAGITICA

Type of work: Philosophic address
Author: John Milton (1608-1674)
First published: 1644

John Milton's classic defense of freedom of the press and religious liberty was

his response to an ordinance of Parliament of June 14, 1643, requiring among

other things that all books receive an official censor's approval prior to publication. Milton saw this act as a renewal of Stuart tyranny and of the Star Chamber decree of 1637 which also denied freedom of the press. When this decree was abolished in 1640, a flood of political and religious pamphlets was released, and for those three years freedom of the press prevailed in England. Milton viewed such intellectual and polemic activity as healthy for his nation and deeply regretted the renewal of state control over printing. In his view, such control reflected the growing tendency of the Presbyterian Parliament to impose uniform religious practices upon England and to oppose any political opposition. In addition, Milton's own *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, published in 1643 and supporting more liberal divorce laws, had been printed without permission; and Parliament had consequently sought to discover the author of this unlicensed work. In form *Areopagitica* is a classical oration addressed to Parliament although it was not intended for oral delivery. The title Milton drew from a speech of Isocrates to the Court of the Areopagus in Athens.

The long opening section establishes a favorable view of the author and the Parliament whom he addresses. Milton characterizes Parliament as a strong defender of liberty that has already restored to England much of her lost freedom. Liberty, he adds, can exist only when complaints can be aired openly and considered wisely. He writes to Parliament as a passionate lover of liberty and an equally ardent supporter of Parliament, as well as a learned scholar representing the learned men of their nation.

The first argument in favor of freedom of the press begins with a long survey of this issue in history. He demonstrates that Greece and Rome valued highly this freedom and recognized atheism and libel as the only two reasons for censorship. Under the Christian Roman emperors, moreover, only after transcription were

books examined, accepted, or judged heretical. But with the Council of Trent and the Inquisition, "the most antichristian council and the most tyrannous inquisition that ever inquired," books were no more "as freely admitted into the world as any other birth." Milton points out to Parliament that the source of their legislation was the tyrannical Council of Trent and the forces of tyranny which Parliament itself had once overthrown in the name of liberty.

Yet those who may agree that the source of censorship is bad may still insist that it produces good results. To this contention Milton replies with his second major argument that moral evil or good is a matter of man's rational choice and that virtue rests in temperance, in choosing between good and evil. God, Milton argues, left to the individual the exercise of his power of choice so that he who can distinguish between good and evil, and abstain from evil, is the true Christian. Real virtue must face trial, must constantly be tested; to prohibit books, therefore, is to prohibit testing virtue and confirming truth. Censorship denies the efficacy of reason. To know evil through books and to reject it, then, is a necessary condition for man's virtue.

But proponents of censorship argue that circulating evil books produces undesirable results: dissemination of evil thoughts among citizens; unnecessary exposure to temptation; and vain employment of time. Milton answers that all religious disputation would have to be removed from the world since even the Bible and the church fathers often relate blasphemy, and, he continues, ignorant men are most often led astray not by learned books but by teachers of false doctrine who, even without books, may spread their doctrines. Prohibiting books, on the other hand, destroys learning and the ability to dispute evil; in addition, a good man may derive good even from evil while an evil man will be a fool with even the best book. As for unnecessary temptations and vain employment of

time, since good men may find false doctrine useful in learning the truth, and bad men cannot be prevented forcibly from acquiring evil knowledge, censorship fails to perform its end.

Thus Milton leads to his third crucial argument that censorship itself is an impractical gesture because it cannot accomplish its task of removing the sources of evil. Milton admits that Plato allowed censorship in his Republic, but he adds that Plato also forbade music and dancing. Plato saw how impractical it was to forbid books alone, for to shut one gate against evil and leave open others is a fool's endeavor.

Another impracticality of censorship arises from the machinery required to carry out such a plan. Many hours would be required to read and approve all works ever published or yet to be published. Such machinery would also grow to resemble the abhorred Inquisition. Sects may flourish despite such efforts because they may persevere through oral tradition, as Christianity itself once did. Finally, how could the quality of the censor be insured? Only a learned man should have this job, yet the tedium of reading so many books of little value would soon drive away all qualified men, leaving the job open to base and ignorant men. No matter what quality censor acquires the position, the very nature of his job insures that only received knowledge, those truths already known and accepted by his age, could pass his examination.

Thus Milton passes to his next central argument that through censorship England must suffer harmful consequences. Censorship could only discourage learning and the search for truth, dispossess scholars of respect, and undermine regard for the common man's ability to judge for himself.

Milton's argument concludes with his fourth and most complex point: that licensing publications not only weakens authority of the truth England already possesses, but also actively hinders the acquisition of new and higher truths.

Milton's travels in Europe showed him the horrible consequences of Inquisitional suppression and gave him perspective on the relative freedoms England enjoyed, but he saw that licensing in England would merely substitute the abuses of pre-Reformation England for a new tyranny of presbyters. Truth, he felt, must never stagnate; it must be believed, understood, not simply accepted from external authority. Without questioning and examination, doctrine becomes a matter of outward conformity.

Censorship is, then, an obstacle to acquiring new and unknown truths, and although England through its reformation had advanced somewhat, she must not rest content with half measures. England may boast of the light of her truth and present knowledge only by failing to realize that truth is given in order to press on for new wisdom. England must search "what we know not by what we know." England's great outburst of learning signifies that God regards this nation with special favor, indicates God's readiness to initiate some great new reformation. We wrong with "sect" or "schism" this fervent search for wisdom God inspires among England's people.

Milton believes it is a good sign to see exercise of rational faculties in the midst of external threats to England's safety; such practice argues a healthy political body and confidence in the safe government Parliament provides, and demonstrates the large portion of freedom allotted citizens by Parliament's mild yoke. Parliament cannot make English citizens less eager for knowledge and wisdom, Milton states, without first destroying their liberty. Of such tyranny Parliament once relieved this nation and still despises.

To prohibit new ideas, moreover, what is more likely than to prohibit truth itself? Since truth most often appears suspect to eyes accustomed only to received opinion, what can happen but by complacent disregard for the new to frustrate further discovery of truth? Times such as

these readily produce false prophets and true. But who can know whether these spokesmen speak wisely unless we hear both? Defending such truth as we now possess, we may find ourselves persecuting new truths. We cannot, however, tolerate "popery and open superstition," but absolute evil no law can permit.

It does not matter, Milton avers, that false doctrine may exist under such free-

dom, for "Strong Truth" can conquer all error in "free and open encounter." If we were all more charitable we could tolerate and leave to individual conscience things indifferent, not fundamentally at odds with the "unity of Spirit" which truly binds us. Imposing strict conformity in matters best left to individual conscience converts truth to base outward conformity.

ARS AMATORIA

Type of work: Didactic-erotic poetry

Author: Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 B.C.-A.D. 18)

First transcribed: c. 1 B.C.

The *Ars amatoria* (*Art of Love*) is a set of entertaining and eminently practical instructions for a successful undertaking of the game of love. The physical, not the philosophical, aspect of love is Ovid's sphere, and pleasure is its sole end. Two of the three books are addressed to young men, the third to girls. Together they make up one of the earliest manuals of the type.

Choosing and winning the proper girl is the subject of the first book. Selection, Ovid encourages the potential lover, is easy; Rome is full of beautiful girls. Go where the action is. He describes in detail the likeliest places: temples, law courts, the forum, the theater, the races, the baths, dinner parties. Once found, the girl must be brought to look favorably on the lover. Ovid's advice to this point is thorough and copious.

Be confident, he says, for all women want to be loved. Even if they do not want a lover, they will appreciate attentions. Win over the lady's maid to advance your cause. If you think it might help, seduce the maid first. Write many letters; promise the beloved anything; plead eloquently; persist through constant refusals. Always be at her side.

Advice on personal hygiene and fashion in dress is offered as well. Ovid tells of the usefulness of wine in warming hearts; and he explains how to handle a

lady's husband. Weeping and pallor may gain a lady's pity, but timidity will never gain her favor. The man must take the initiative, and the girl will be glad of an excuse to give in. In short, be adaptable and quick to seize any opportunity to win favor.

Book II consists of advice for holding the girl's love once it is won. Magic spells and potions will not work, Ovid assures his readers. To be loved, a man must be lovable. Physical beauty is good, but it fades in time. The mind and spirit must be cultivated. He advises the lover to learn tact, tolerance, gentleness, eloquence, humility. Never fight with a woman, for making up requires expensive gifts. Bear with her rages and unreasonableness. Let her win at games. Share her opinions and do all possible services for her. If she is ill, be constantly in attendance.

Praise her elaborately and constantly. Never let her find out about your other mistresses unless you do so deliberately, to make her jealous. If you know she has other lovers, pretend not to know. Do not behave like a jealous husband. Never call attention to her imperfections or her age (mature women make better lovers, anyway). Finally, Ovid counsels, learn the proper techniques in bed so that you may both receive the maximum of pleasure.

In Book III Ovid admits that sauce for

the goose is sauce for the gander; ladies also deserve some instruction in the art of love. He advises girls to taste love's delights now, before they grow too old to be desired by lovers.

Detailed advice is offered about improving one's appearance and dress, how to enhance one's basic type. Cleanliness and cosmetics are discussed. A girl must learn to laugh, walk, talk, dance, and sing gracefully, play games well (but not too well), study some literature, develop an even and pleasing temper. Make yourselves available to lovers, Ovid says, by appearing in public places frequently. Beware of false or mercenary men and do

not believe everything a man tells you. Cultivate each man for his own particular talents and be especially pleasant to poets, for they can make you immortal in their verse.

Do not make it too easy for the lover, but learn how to deceive your husband when necessary. Do not be violently jealous. Make elaborate vows of love. Ovid also tells the ladies what he had already told the men: learn to make love. Feign ecstasy even if you do not feel it. Be subtle and mysterious and desirable. Finally, when you are happy in love, thank Ovid for showing you the way.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Author: Anthony Trollope (1815-1882)

First published: 1883

An Autobiography, by Anthony Trollope, is at once egotistical and amusing. One of the most prolific novelists of the nineteenth century, Trollope tells how he rose from obscurity to become second only to Dickens and Thackeray in popularity, and he shares as interesting sidelights his opinions of his contemporaries and of the art of creative writing, opinions that are calculated to shock anyone who believes in "inspiration." Trollope was a boisterous, outspoken man through whose eyes we can see a side of Victorianism that is often neglected—the rich humor of the satirist.

Trollope looked back on his childhood as a time of misery; his father was poor, and he was unable to defend himself in fist fights with the local boys. Also, his family was divided. His mother went to America, and he found himself pretty much on his own, with the responsibility of having to pay the bills of his father. From this miserable origin (exaggerated in order to make *An Autobiography* more dramatic) Trollope could move in only one way. He managed to obtain a job in the General Post Office in London, a civil

service position that he always looked to with pride.

Never very studious, Trollope was the type of young man who worked so that he might play. He wanted to be a gentleman because gentlemen had more pleasures than other people enjoyed. Thus, his earliest days in the General Post Office were turbulent; he was continually making clumsy mistakes that threatened his dismissal. In fact, the situation became so bad that he hated his work and was only too glad to be transferred to Ireland. This transfer pleased his superior perhaps as much as himself.

In Ireland three things happened to the young man: he acquired a taste, almost an obsession, for fox hunting, he wrote his early novels, and he married. His marriage brought financial problems that his first novels were unable to alleviate. While he was at work on his third novel, he made a change in his literary endeavors; he wrote a short paper satirically denouncing the government's policy in Ireland. Then, while he was surveying for the Post Office in rural England, a new idea matured. He decided to use

material drawn from people he had met and to write satire directed against the abuses that he most frequently encountered. This novel was *The Warden*, the first of the Barchester novels.

From this point on, his life was a continual rise. In his work at the Post Office he was promoted, and in his literary career he wrote *Barchester Towers*, his greatest novel. He began to travel more often in an official capacity, making trips to Egypt and the West Indies, and he learned to write in whatever situation he found himself—on horseback, on ship, even in sickness. He was very methodical: he kept a diary in which he maintained strict account of the number of pages he wrote each day. Then he set a certain number of pages that he planned to write each week, and finally he arranged his novels so that they would come to exactly the number of pages that the publisher wanted. Because he did not believe in inspiration, he thought of creative writing as he did of any other occupation; the excellence came as a result of practice and diligence. He therefore trained himself to begin a new novel on the day after an old one was finished, and in this way he managed to write on the average of three long novels a year.

In 1859, Trollope heard of Thackeray's forthcoming periodical, *The Cornhill Magazine*. He wrote Thackeray asking if he might contribute and to his surprise was asked to write a novel for the first number. The connection with the magazine and *Framley Parsonage*, the first novel he published in its pages, introduced him to the London literary world. He moved to London and began to associate with the figures with whom he had previously wished to be acquainted. In 1861 he was asked to join the Garrick Club, and for the first time in his life he began to feel that he was popular. These years were also the time of his friendship with Thackeray. He thought that Thackeray was indolent and unorganized but that *Henry Esmond* was the greatest novel in the English language. Having

begun a pauper, Trollope now had risen to the top of the literary ladder. Having become a name, he was frequently mentioned with Thackeray, Dickens, and Wilkie Collins.

As a successful novelist, Trollope felt that he was qualified to speak on novels, the art of writing them, and his contemporaries, and it is in these chapters that he gives some of his most valuable insights into his age. The novel, as he saw it, had taken poetry's place as the most widely read literary form, but in its increasing popularity more and different types of readers had to be catered to. If the novel was to be good rather than harmful, the novelist must consider the extent of his influence; he must avoid pictures of vice and he must teach morally edifying lessons. But the novel has another responsibility; it must please. Thus, the good novel is a pleasing moral lesson. Because we are not moved by fantasy, the novel should also be "realistic"; that is, the novelist should strive to make his characters act and speak like ordinary people in our ordinary everyday world.

With these basic assumptions about the moral purpose of fiction, assumptions that were not at all original with Trollope, he discussed his contemporaries. He thought that Thackeray was the greatest English novelist not only of the nineteenth century but of all time; Thackeray wrote "good" (interesting) stories with high moral purposes. Second was George Eliot, who was too much a philosopher for Trollope's simple taste, and third was Dickens, who was unrealistic in his description of human behavior but still very moral. Of the other novelists of his age—Bulwer-Lytton, Wilkie Collins, Charles Lever, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Reade, and Rhonda Broughton—Trollope has little to say, but what he does say is judicious and straightforward. He knew that he did not equal Thackeray, Eliot, or Dickens, but he was willing to say that he should stand fourth in literary rank.

Trollope had few words and no praise

for criticism. He denied that it was an art because it had become subjective, arbitrary, and dogmatic, and because the leading critics lacked, of all things, critical ability. Also, he was well aware of the way that good reviews were purchased by the authors and publishers. All in all, he felt that criticism was a disgrace to English literature.

After these remarks on his contemporaries, Trollope returned to his own life to sketch in the major events of his "age of prosperity." In these pages he makes one of the most startling comments in the book: he describes his writing technique. He wrote only three hours a day, and he wrote exactly 250 words every quarter of an hour. He set his watch before him and wrote, and when the three hours were up, he stopped, regardless of where he was. In other words, he daily produced the equivalent of ten printed pages and

in a year turned out three novels of three volumes each. What he sacrificed in quality he gained in quantity, and through writing at this monumental rate he was able to resign from the Post Office and support himself with his pen. Free to associate with his literary friends and to pursue a life of gentlemanly leisure, Trollope took full advantage of his prosperity. He continued to write and for several years edited *St. Paul's Magazine*; he also continued to travel, to hunt, and to spend social evenings in his favorite clubs. As he concludes *An Autobiography*, he looks in retrospect over his life and, to illustrate how successful he has been, gives a list of his books and the amount of money that he earned for each. Such a comfortable income is available to any person, Trollope tells us, if he is as diligent and hard-working as the author of *An Autobiography*.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON

Type of work: Memoirs

Author: Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)

First published: 1853

It is one of fate's curious tricks that as Benjamin Robert Haydon's reputation as a historical painter has diminished since his lifetime, the estimation of his writings has risen correspondingly. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the years principally covered by the *Autobiography*, Haydon's friends gave encouragement and much-needed financial assistance to his efforts to bring England to an appreciation of the ideals of High Art, which to Haydon meant historical painting on an epic, Raphaellesque scale. His excursions with the pen, however, were inconveniently likely to bring enmity and spite on the impetuous head of the young painter; and it was earnestly wished by his friends that he would wield the brush instead of the pen.

Now, a century after his death, Haydon's merit as an artist is dubious. There are suggestions that he be redeemed

somewhat from the obscurity and neglect he has fallen into, but these are by no means strong enough for him to be considered a central figure in the history of painting. But his intimacy with prominent social and literary figures of the English Romantic period, his spirited style of writing, and his faithful recording of his activities, thoughts, and impressions of people, make his autobiography and journals a rich source of information for anyone interested in the background of English life in the early nineteenth century.

The *Autobiography* covers the period from his birth in 1786 to 1820. Haydon began writing it, working from recollection and from the journals he kept throughout his life, in 1842. His suicide at the age of sixty cut short the writing, but the rest of his life can be traced in the twenty-six bulky volumes of his jour-

nals. Had we only the *Autobiography*, however, we would still obtain an accurate portrait of the man. Even in his youth the impassioned qualities of his character glow through the pages: pride, hotheadedness, tenacity to a principle, incompetence in his financial affairs, stanch patriotism, devotion to the ideals of art, and indomitable optimism.

Haydon's early determination to devote himself to art met with equally early and long-continued opposition from his family. His parents expected him to take over their prosperous bookseller's shop in Plymouth, but by the age of sixteen the boy hated everything connected with the business and was already set upon becoming a great painter. He relates in his memoirs the family crises that occurred as a result. At last his ambitions were taken seriously, however, and his father, sending him off to London to study art, agreed to support him as long as possible.

The enthusiasm in Haydon's account of his early adventures, even in a retrospect of almost forty years, attests to the nearly frenzied energy with which at the time he plunged into his new career. Chronically poor eyesight could not deter him, and even recurring periods of near-blindness only increased his industry when the danger to his eyes had passed. He studied anatomy; he became acquainted with the prominent painters of London (whose contradictory counsels confirmed him in his own ideas about art). With one of his fellow-students, David Wilkie, Haydon began in 1805 a friendship that influenced both men as mature artists.

The narrative of the *Autobiography* fairly bristles with enthusiasm as Haydon describes his early struggles for recognition and commissions. Excerpts from his journals are often introduced to trace the progress of a painting. Comments frequently appear wishing that he could do without sleep or food to finish the work more efficiently. His ambitions for greatness seem always to have been at fever-heat, and when his friends predicted that

his second major painting, "The Assassination of Dentatus," would change England's entire conception of art, Haydon was filled with hope that it should be so.

Consequently, the cold reception of his painting by the Royal Academy seemed cruel and incomprehensible to him. The painters who formed the Royal Academy were Haydon's detractors throughout his career. He was too individual, iconoclastic, and impetuous for their taste; and their tyrannizing over art, their pomposity and petty jealousies, inflamed him. The enmity that began with the unfavorable treatment of Haydon's painting of Dentatus became a feud that lasted for years. He opposed the academicians individually and as a group; he conducted wars with them in periodical magazines; he argued in society against the monopolization of art criticism by these connoisseurs, when it ought to be the province of working artists. As a result of Haydon's attacks on the Academy, he went for long periods of his life without commissions, without income, and without encouragement by influential people. But his courageous defense of his own ideals against the Academy never abated.

The *cause célèbre* of Haydon's career in argumentation was that of the Elgin Marbles, a group of Grecian sculptures brought to England by the Earl of Elgin. Haydon was enraptured by the sculptures from his first sight of them. He made countless drawings from them and casts of them. The *Autobiography* is filled with references to the perfection of anatomy in the human figures, the grace and cleanliness of their lines, the strength and fluidity they suggested. Haydon eagerly supported Lord Elgin's attempt to interest the British government in purchasing the marbles for the nation; but Payne Knight, as spokesman for the Royal Academy, gave such an unfavorable judgment on them that they dropped immediately in public estimation. Haydon waged a pen-and-ink war on their behalf in which his courageous enthusiasm for the sculptures was exceeded only by the

imprudence of some of his criticisms of their detractors. Although his writings deepened the personal animosity many felt for him, Haydon was a significant force behind the eventual purchase of the marbles for the British Museum in 1816.

The matter of the Elgin Marbles was only one instance of Haydon's aroused pertinacity in his principles of art. From the beginning of his career, the *Autobiography* traces an overpowering concern for what he called "High Art." He believed passionately in a "Grand Style," in the moral beauty of painting, in a strict and loving adherence to nature in art. Singlehandedly, he undertook a mission to educate the British nation to an acceptance of his high ideals. But public taste is a capricious thing; the fashionable world preferred to be amused rather than edified; and Haydon never reached his goal.

He never gave it up; constant failure could not calm the enthusiasm he had displayed in the years of the *Autobiography*. At the end of each year he habitually reviewed his life, with strong self-criticism and earnest plans to become more disciplined, more industrious, and more grateful to God for his accomplishments. His faith in Christianity and the providence of God sustained him through the darkest failures and always re-inspired him to go on. We see in the *Autobiography* that each painting was begun and forwarded with repeated prayer, and completed with humble thanks to God, the source of his inspiration.

It was a rigorous regime Haydon set up when he painted. Working in tiny, cramped quarters with a canvas as large as the room would hold, he painted for hours, all night and on into the next day. He would re-do a head ten times if necessary, until it satisfied him. In intervals between painting he would read for inspiration, in the historians, Homer, Virgil, sometimes in contemporary novelists. On the occasions when he went into society instead of painting, he felt remorse and contempt for himself afterward. The

most relentless application to the work at hand was always his working habit, and he seemed to thrive on it, despite the ruin of his eyesight, despite the debts that began to accumulate immediately after his father was obliged to cease his financial support, in 1810.

Haydon described himself once in the *Autobiography* as having air-balloons under his armpits and ether in his soul. This is a fair description of the usual state of his spirits. But these empyrean aspirations were little help to him in practical matters. About the state of his finances he seemed totally incompetent. Were it not for the continual support of friends, Haydon would certainly have been ruined in short order. He did, however, have numerous friends. His incursions into the literary world brought him into close relations with Scott, Hazlitt, Shelley, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, and Keats. Particularly close was Haydon's friendship with the last two; they addressed several poems to Haydon, as did Hunt, Lamb, and Elizabeth Barrett, among others.

The word-pictures Haydon gives in the *Autobiography* of these literary celebrities are some of the most delightful parts of his memoirs. With the painter's eye for physical detail, he had also an appreciation of characteristics of mind and behavior, so that his descriptions of them suggest vividly their personalities.

Though the enmity of the Royal Academy prevented Haydon from attaining any highly respected position in England, he was highly regarded outside his country. The great Italian artist, Canova, confirmed Haydon's opinion of the Elgin Marbles in every respect; the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg made him a member; Goethe praised him. But Haydon went without commissions in London, and became more and more deeply entangled with creditors and moneylenders.

Haydon's eminence seems to have been a spasmodic thing. To admire his paintings was occasionally the fashion-

able rage. When his "Christ Entering Jerusalem" was first exhibited in 1820, the whole of Piccadilly was blocked with carriages of people to see it; the receipts for admission amounted to £1,760. But no one wanted to buy it, and no one felt inclined to commission another painting from the artist. Such disappointments happened continually to Haydon. His reaction was invariably incredulity, dismay, rebellion, and then the purchase (on credit) of a larger canvas to begin an even greater work.

It is at a point like this that the *Auto-*

biography breaks off, with Haydon projecting a more magnificent picture, "The Healing of Lazarus." It does not tell us of Haydon's eventual marriage to the young widow he loved, their happiness at first, the deaths of five of their children, increasing burdens of debt, his four imprisonments for debt, and his suicide, by gunshot and razor slash, in 1846. Haydon died as extravagantly as he lived; and the account he left of his life, in the *Autobiography* and his journals, is perhaps a greater example of the Grand Style in art than any of his paintings.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LEIGH HUNT

Author: Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)

Time: 1784-1850

Locale: England and Italy

First published: 1850

Principal personages:

LEIGH HUNT

MARIANNE KENT HUNT, his wife

ISAAC HUNT, his father

JOHN HUNT, his brother and co-editor of *The Examiner*

GEORGE GORDON, Lord Byron

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

JOHN KEATS

WILLIAM HAZLITT

CHARLES LAMB

THOMAS CARLYLE

Seldom, if ever before or since, has a creative man, notable in his own right, been so fortunate in his association with great men as was Leigh Hunt. To have known intimately all three of the leading "younger generation" English Romantic poets—Byron, Shelley, and Keats—and to have been well acquainted with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, and Carlyle is a social and intellectual privilege not in any sense usual.

The *Autobiography* of James Henry Leigh Hunt, to give him his full name, is far more than a chronological account of the life of an important essayist and minor poet. It is a sorting out of vivid impressions from past experiences and associations, impressions which delineate Hunt's lifelong passion for human ad-

vancement as well as his ability in old age to evaluate objectively the way he has come, the influences he has experienced, and those he has exerted.

Published in 1850, nine years before Hunt's death, the *Autobiography* was hailed by Thomas Carlyle as the best autobiographical writing in the English language. This opinion was widely shared by reviewers, and the book has become a classic of its kind. Its quality derives largely from its emphasis on human values and on the interactions between the author and his various notable friends. Leigh Hunt, therefore, can afford to be neglectful of mere dates and mundane details; he has matters of present and future value to impart.

The *Autobiography* begins with a sur-

vey of the author's ancestry, largely Anglican ministers with strong Tory leanings. In the seventeenth century the family, seeking to avoid harassment by the Puritans, had moved to the West Indies but had returned to England in the following century. Leigh Hunt's father, Isaac Hunt, had gone to Philadelphia for an education and had narrowly escaped being tarred and feathered during the American Revolution for the Tory views he expressed in various pamphlets. Having returned to England with his wife and children, he had encountered severe financial difficulties and had abandoned the Tory cause to assume more liberal opinions. With his wife's enthusiastic support, Isaac Hunt had become a Unitarian minister and strong advocate of political reform.

After the Hunts had settled in the Middlesex village of Southgate, their youngest son Leigh was born on October 19, 1784. With his brothers, he was brought up in an atmosphere pervaded by the newly adopted liberalism of both parents, the general improvidence of his father, and the kindness and near pacifism of his mother. Yet, despite the appeal of Hunt's reminiscences about his youth and his schooling at Christ's Hospital, which Coleridge and Lamb had attended earlier, the *Autobiography* achieves its greatness only in its dealing with the adult life of Leigh Hunt, for it is not in and of itself that Hunt's life demands this memorial; it is the interaction of this life with others that draws our attention.

Having, through his father's efforts, had his first volume of poetry published when he was sixteen, Leigh Hunt continued to follow a literary career. His editing of the weekly *Examiner* in collaboration with his politically minded brother John, made of the young Hunt a resolute champion of liberal politics. Not long after *The Examiner* was founded, Hunt married Marianne Kent, who not only became the devoted mother of a large family but also proved an undaunted

partner throughout the difficulties which his open pronouncements for reform brought upon Hunt. Its expression of these liberal views made *The Examiner* attractive to Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Hazlitt, who all soon published in it and thus made the acquaintance of Leigh Hunt.

Its unreserved political criticisms repeatedly involved *The Examiner* in legal prosecutions by the government. After three acquittals, the Hunt brothers, who had called the Prince Regent "a libertine over head and ears in disgrace . . . the companion of gamblers and demireps," were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and were each fined five hundred pounds. The chapter in which Hunt describes his strange imprisonment has become something of a classic. Its most excellent features are the humanly humorous character sketch of "honest old Cave," the jailor; the account of various visitors, including Byron, Lamb, and Hazlitt; and the description of the previously unused rooms of the prison infirmary which Hunt charmingly redecorated for himself and his family and in which one of his daughters was born. Despite these notes of pleasantness, however, the concluding comments on the author's release from imprisonment in 1815 bear an interesting resemblance to Byron's account of the freeing of Bonivard in "The Prisoner of Chillon."

After regaining their freedom, John and Leigh Hunt gave clear indications in *The Examiner* that their imprisonment had not mellowed their political enmity toward the Prince Regent. His health having declined during his imprisonment, Leigh Hunt continued to enjoy Byron's visits and was especially pleased by an unannounced visit from Wordsworth, during which he characteristically drew his visitor's attention to a volume of Wordsworth and one of Milton side by side on the bookshelf. Although Hunt was frequently critical of Byron, the *Autobiography* gives evidence of a genuine

respect for Byron's poetry and a sincere appreciation of the poet's attractive qualities.

Byron soon left England, and Hunt did not hear from him again until Byron some years later invited him to Italy. At this point the *Autobiography* takes up the author's association with Shelley, Keats, Lamb, and Coleridge. Of these, Shelley is singled out as a friend above all friends and as a spirit who, although he professed antagonism to the Established Church, was the most "Christian" of men. Hunt was the most loyal of Shelley's friends, standing by him without reservation or doubt during the ordeal of Harriet Shelley's suicide and the government's subsequent action which deprived Shelley of the custody of his two children. Hunt's anecdotes and descriptions of Shelley have become valuable portions of the biography.

Hunt declares his love for Keats to have been second only to that for the "heart of hearts," Shelley. He finds both poets to have had that greatness which renders it delightful to be obliged by them and an equal but not greater delight to oblige them. It is evident that only Hunt's modesty prevents him from writing freely of the extent to which his friendship was a molding influence on the poetic development of Keats. With Byron and Shelley, Hunt (quite mistakenly) believes that the vitriolic attack by the *Quarterly Review* against *Endymion* was largely responsible for the early death of Keats.

Although Hunt pays little attention to the dates of his various activities and enterprises, he discusses his editorship not only of *The Examiner* but also of *The Indicator* and *The Liberal*. He was co-editor of *The Examiner* from 1808 to 1822. Meanwhile, from 1819 to 1821, he also edited *The Indicator*, in which his personal essays drew praise from his close friends, William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb. Hunt, in his turn, gives favorable accounts of the personalities of

Hazlitt and Lamb. Especially appreciative is his presentation of the latter as a tender-hearted but witty "Lamb-punner." Coleridge, incidentally, was less well known to Hunt than were the two Romantic essayists; yet Coleridge, especially his trait of talkativeness, receives interesting treatment in the *Autobiography*.

An important event in Hunt's life was his decision to accept the invitation of Byron and Shelley to move his family to Italy and there, under their sponsorship, edit a new periodical, *The Liberal*. Hunt soon left *The Examiner*, now in decline, to accept this new post. He gives a graphic description of the voyage to Italy, a journey which repeatedly tried both the patience and stamina of the Hunt family. A highlight of the *Autobiography* is the narrative of Hunt's first weeks in Italy. The reunion with Byron, Thomas Moore, and especially Shelley at Leghorn, and the few days he spent with Shelley before the latter's tragic drowning, are described so as to leave no doubt of Hunt's selflessness and capacity for genuine friendship. One of the most memorable scenes in biographical prose is that of the gathering of Shelley's friends, including Trelawney, Byron, and Hunt, for the cremation of Shelley's body.

After the death of Shelley, Byron's enthusiasm for *The Liberal* waned, and the periodical survived for only four numbers, all published in 1822. But the Hunt family, although in difficult financial circumstances, remained in Italy until 1825, when they returned to England and Hunt resumed his literary and editorial profession. The *Autobiography* contains a lengthy account of the more pleasant voyage back to England and concludes with a modest review of the author's numerous, and now more generally accepted, literary and journalistic endeavors, none of which, except the *Autobiography* itself, has achieved the status of his earlier essays and poems.

The final view Leigh Hunt gives us of himself is that of a man of letters who

has come through a storm of struggle and controversy upon which he can look back without either regret or malice. He appears finally as an unselfish friend and a

fair evaluator of his important inspirational function among men of generally greater literary talent than his own.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Type of work: Memoirs and journals

Author: William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

First published: *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, 1915; *Four Years*, 1921; *The Trembling of the Veil*, 1922; *Autobiographies*, 1926; *Estrangement*, 1926; *Reflections from a Diary Kept in 1909, 1926; The Death of Synge and Other Passages from an Old Diary*, 1928; *Dramatis Personae*, 1936

Yeats's *Autobiography* is important for several reasons, not the least of which is that it serves as an illuminating background to the greatest body of twentieth century poetry in England, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Yeats's poetry is about people: imaginary people (Michael Robartes, Crazy Jane), people of Irish legend (Cuchulain, Fergus), people of Irish history (Parnell, Robert Emmet), people to whom Yeats was related (the Middletons, the Pollexfens), people Yeats knew (Maud Gonne, Lady Gregory). All these, and many more, are celebrated in his poems. The main figure in the poems is, of course, "I, the poet William Yeats."

The poems themselves are not important as autobiography, for the people in them exist in art, not in life. There is a "Yeats country" just as there is a "Faulkner country," but whereas Faulkner changed the names (Oxford, Mississippi becoming "Jefferson"), Yeats did not. In the "Yeats country" Michael Robartes is as real as Maud Gonne, Cuchulain is as alive as Lady Gregory. Yet we are always aware that many of Yeats's people are taken from real life, and in the *Autobiography* we are afforded an extraordinary view into that life. We read about the places Yeats made famous: Sligo, Coole, Ballylee. We meet the Yeats family and Irish peasants, poets of the 1890's, patriots and revolutionaries, spiritualists, and Swedish royalty. We are presented with the real life equivalent of the "Yeats

country" of the *Collected Poems*, and we see it through the eyes and through the memory of the poet himself.

The first section of the *Autobiography*, "Reveries over Childhood and Youth," begins with Yeats's earliest memories and concludes with the publication of his first book of poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889). The chief locales are Sligo, London, and Dublin.

As a very young child Yeats stood in awe of his sea-captain grandfather, William Pollexfen, but it was his father, John Butler Yeats, whose influence was dominant throughout his childhood and adolescence. The elder Yeats, a none-too-successful painter and an opinionated skeptic, influenced his son in several ways. He fostered his interest in literature by reading to him from the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Walter Scott, Chaucer, Shelley, Thoreau, and many other writers, and in the theater by taking him to see Henry Irving in *Hamlet*. Until he was nearly twenty Yeats seems to have shared most of his father's opinions (and they were generally outspoken ones) about art, education, and politics. It was only after he had begun to study psychical research and mystical philosophy that he finally was able to break away from his father's influence. But in some respects his father's influence was never broken; John Butler Yeats's hatred for abstractions, for example, was one opinion his son held to all his life, and it greatly influenced the younger Yeats's attitudes

towards politics, art, and life itself. Moreover, Yeats was always conscious of being an artist's son and aware, therefore, that he must follow a career that would be the whole end of life in itself rather than a means to becoming well off and living pleasantly. The work which Yeats took as the all and end of life was, of course, his poetry.

In this section we read of many things: Yeats's early interest in natural science (which he later grew to hate); his lack of scholarship and his resultant lack of anything like a systematic formal education; the influence on him of the Fenian leader, John O'Leary; and his continuing interest in legends of the Irish heroes, in stories of ghosts and omens, and in peasant tales of all kinds. It was only natural that Yeats was later to collect these stories (as in *The Celtic Twilight*, 1893), for he was never to forget his mother and a fisherman's wife telling each other stories such as Homer himself might have told.

Most of all, this section of the *Autobiography* is a portrait of the artist as a young man. At first Yeats merely played the roles of sage, magician, poet. Sometimes he was Hamlet, or Byron's Manfred, or Shelley's Alastor; at other times he was Byron himself. Then he began to write poems in admiring imitation of Shelley and Spenser. All of his early work was derivative: the well-known poem, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," for example, was heavily indebted to his acquaintance with Thoreau's *Walden*. It was not until years afterward that he began, deliberately, to reshape his style by discarding traditional metaphors, employing looser rhythms, communicating emotion that he described as "cold." But for now there was nothing "cold" about his emotion. Very much under the influence of his father's belief that only passionate poetry is important, he filled his early lyrics with imagery and color, a heritage from the Romantic poets.

The longest section of the *Autobiography*, "The Trembling of the Veil,"

deals with the period between 1887 and the turn of the century. On the one hand this section is a record of his friendships during these years. Nearly all of the famous literary figures of the 1890's are here: W. E. Henley, Oscar Wilde, William Morris, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Shaw, George Russell ("A. E."), John Synge, Arthur Symonds, Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm, William Sharp ("Fiona Mcleod"), Paul Verlaine—Yeats knew them all. On the other hand the section is a record of the coming to maturity of Yeats's own work and its chief importance is perhaps that it gives us insights into the development of his theories of poetry.

He did not forsake his interest in emotion, but he began to write poems combining personal feeling with larger patterns of myth and symbol. His interest in myth and symbol, an understanding of which is essential to an understanding of his mature poetry, led him into a series of esoteric studies. He was associated with the Theosophist, Madame Blavatsky; he experimented with the evocative power of symbols under the direction of Macgregor Mathers and later in conjunction with his uncle, George Pollexfen. He eventually realized that he had found only a variety of images. He had been searching for a tradition—for the centrality of a tradition—but he had hit upon its opposite: fragmentation.

Yeats envied Dante for having had a unified culture out of which to write. "Unity of Culture," a unity stemming from a universally accepted mythology, is precisely what, in Yeats's view, the modern world lacks. Symbolism he saw as the language of mythology. For years Yeats was occupied with the attempt to regain, in Ireland, that "Unity of Culture" which would make the language of symbolism intelligible. He hoped to find his mythology in peasant legendry. He hoped to encourage a national literature, one above politics and all temporal disputes, which would draw upon such a mythology. Finally he came to realize

that his dream of a modern nation returned to Unity of Culture, was false. When this dream failed, he inevitably turned inward. Lacking a traditional mythology, he created one of his own, compounded from a complex variety of sources. He adopted myths and symbols from Christianity, from paganism, from the Orient, from Theosophy, and from Irish folklore. Perhaps his most important source was his own life: the people he knew became symbolic personages figuring in a private mythology. Consequently, as we read anecdotes about Synge, Lady Gregory, Maud Gonne, or John O'Leary, we come face to face with the real-life counterparts of some of the chief inhabitants of the "Yeats country."

In the third section of the *Autobiography*, "Dramatis Personae, 1896-1902," the chief "Personae" are Edward Martyn, Arthur Symonds, George Moore, and, above all, Lady Gregory. This section recounts the struggles of a small group of people to found in Ireland a native and national theater. But most of all it serves as Yeats's graceful and grateful tribute to Lady Gregory, his patron, collaborator, and friend. She encouraged him in his work and lent him money. Of even greater influence in the development of his art, as Yeats recalled years later,

were the times he stayed at Coole, Lady Gregory's home, where Yeats spent the summers of twenty years. Among the trees and by the lake at Coole, Yeats was to do much of his greatest work, and the place itself, which he said he knew better than any spot on earth, became, like the people he knew, a familiar and important part of the world of his *Collected Poems*.

The *Autobiography* is far from being a complete account of Yeats's life. The first three sections cover the years 1865 to 1902, but Yeats was to live until 1939, and to do nearly all of his important work during the remaining years. Of the last three sections of the book, two ("Estrangement" and "The Death of Synge") are but fragmentary extracts from a diary Yeats kept in 1909. "Estrangement" is a collection of scattered and, at times, half-formed ideas about art, and is not, in the true sense of the word, autobiography. "The Death of Synge" is also largely a series of reveries about art; those reveries, in particular, which were induced by his friend's death. The final section of the book, "The Bounty of Sweden," (written in 1925), is a relaxed account of his trip to Stockholm in 1923 to receive the Nobel Prize.

THE AWKWARD AGE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry James (1843-1916)

Time: The 1890's, presumably

Locale: London, and outlying estates

First published: 1899

Principal characters:

FERNANDA BROOKENHAM (MRS. BROOK), the leader of a smart London set

EDWARD BROOKENHAM, her husband, a government employee

NANDA, their daughter

HAROLD, their son

MR. LONGDON, a more or less elderly gentleman, a former suitor of Mrs. Brook's mother, Lady Julia

GUSTAVUS VANDERBANK (VAN), a member of Mrs. Brook's circle, also a government employee

MR. MITCHETT (MITCHY), a wealthy young man who belongs to the circle

THE DUCHESS (JANE), the widow of an Italian duke, also a member of the circle

LITTLE AGGIE, her niece

TISHY GRENDON, a young married woman, a friend of Nanda

CARRIE DONNER, her sister

MR. CASHMORE, Mrs. Donner's lover

LADY FANNY CASHMORE, his wife

LORD PETHERTON, Lady Fanny's brother and Mitchy's friend

The Awkward Age stems from that intensely experimental period at the turn of the century in which Henry James laid the groundwork for the major accomplishments of *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*. Coming as it does between *What Maisie Knew*, in which the point of view is restricted to that of a young girl, and *The Sacred Fount*, in which the point of view is that of a narrator for whom the actions of the other characters are the subject of endless but unconfirmable speculation, *The Awkward Age* is more technically dazzling, and possibly more enigmatic, than either in that James restricts himself almost entirely to dialogue and eschews, except for two or three very brief passages, his customary practice of "going behind," that is, of entering the minds of any of his characters. The effect is rather that of a lengthy closet drama (James admits in the preface that his model has been the *roman dialogué* of the French authoress Gyp), but a drama surpassing in subtlety, intricacy, and elusiveness anything heretofore written in that genre. With the help only of those few occasions when James renders Nanda's and Vanderbank's thoughts, and of a hypothetical spectator to whom James attributes hypothetical interpretations of tones of voice and facial expressions, the reader is left to infer, as the characters themselves do, the motivational and situational realities behind the labyrinth of the novel's conversation, or at least to register how the characters' own inferences bring about the events in which they participate.

The central characters of the novel are members of Mrs. Brookenham's "group," a select circle of sophisticated conversa-

tionalists for whom innuendo and the immediately perceived hinted nuance have become a style of life. Beyond mere talk—their lives reside so largely in their talk—is the prospect of what will happen to the group's tone, what restraints will be imposed, upon the admission into the drawing room of Mrs. Brook's marriageable but unmarried daughter, Nanda. Into this distinctly "modern" society comes Mr. Longdon, and the novel opens on a lengthy conversation between him and Vanderbank following the occasion of their having spent the evening—Mr. Longdon's first—at Mrs. Brook's. Vanderbank, who presents, it emerges, a remarkably handsome and imposing appearance, but whose means are hardly commensurate with the impression he creates, is taken with the older man who so charmingly contrasts with the tone he is accustomed to, and Mr. Longdon, despite misgivings about that tone—which finds its quintessence in Mrs. Brook—is similarly pleased. Mr. Longdon confides to Van that he has been a suitor to both Van's mother and Mrs. Brook's, Lady Julia, and that he has never forgotten his feeling for the latter, from whom her own daughter differs so radically. Upon seeing a picture of Nanda, Mr. Longdon exclaims on her similarity to Lady Julia. The conversation ends on Mr. Longdon's revealing that the conversational tone of the evening has indeed shocked him.

The next "act," so to speak (there are ten), presents us immediately with Mrs. Brook in colloquy with her son Harold, whom she catches in the act of stealing a five-pound note. Mrs. Brook is operating in her family mode, a studied and languorous melancholy quite at odds with her public performances, and her conver-

sation turns on the problem of getting Harold invited to house parties (her son has obviously taken lessons in manipulation from her) and the family's financial straits. With Harold's exit and the entrance of the Duchess, the talk turns to Nanda, who is visiting her married friend Tishy Grendon. The Duchess chides Mrs. Brook for allowing her daughter to mingle with such questionable associates, whereas she, in the European manner, has carefully sheltered her niece, Little Aggie, from any such possible contaminations, has preserved her a perfect little *tabula rasa* until the time of her marriage. She then urges Mrs. Brook to snare Mitchy as a husband for Nanda; she adds that his ugliness and his being the son of a shoemaker render him totally unsatisfactory as a potential mate for Aggie, though she will shortly thereafter instigate a maneuver designed to land him for Aggie. After a brief conversation between Mrs. Brook and her husband, Mitchy and Petherton enter, and it is shown that Petherton is probably the Duchess' lover. Mrs. Brook attributes to Mitchy, despite his outrageous talk, a gentleness and "niceness" lacking in the rest of them, and her comment, sincere or not, will be borne out in the development of the novel. The Duchess re-enters, this time with Aggie, and when Carrie Donner's arrival is shortly followed by that of Lady Fanny, the talk turns to the erotic entanglements of the Grendon-Donner-Cashmore set, the Duchess informing Mitchy that it is Nanda who is her mother's source on the degree of intimacy between Mrs. Donner and Mr. Cashmore.

In the following scene Mr. Longdon, and the reader, are confronted for the first time with Nanda, whose resemblance to Lady Julia overwhelms Mr. Longdon. He and Nanda develop an immediate rapport.

Mrs. Brook sounds Van on the subject of Mr. Longdon's fortune and what he may do for Nanda, and in the same dialogue indicates that she is possibly in love with Van.

At a weekend party given by Mitchy, Mr. Longdon urges Nanda to marry, but she rejects Mitchy as impossible and confides to him that she will probably never marry. The Duchess tries to persuade Mr. Longdon to settle on Van a sum which will allow him to marry Nanda (thus leaving Mitchy, upon whom Mrs. Brook has designs for Nanda, free for Aggie), who is "as sick as a little cat—with her passion" for him. Mr. Longdon makes his offer to the uncertain Van, who requests time to consider the proposition and refuses to allow his prospective benefactor to name a sum.

In the ensuing conversation, Van reveals to Mrs. Brook Mr. Longdon's generous offer, which that lady—whether merely prophetically or in an attempt to determine his hand—enigmatically hints he will refuse. Mrs. Brook then, against Van's articulated wishes, imparts to Mitchy the information she has just gained and suggests that Van will pass up the chance to propose to Nanda rather than appear to accept a bride. She has, she says, made her revelation simply in accordance with that principle of openness and honesty which is so much the note of their society, and the scene concludes with the mutual bestowal of lavish accolade, somewhat undercut by Van's ironic awareness of the prevalent duplicity and the possible mixture of motive for Mrs. Brook's behavior. Nanda enters shortly after the departure of her mother's guests, and Mrs. Brook questions her about her relation with Mr. Longdon and broaches the possibility and advisability of his adopting the girl.

At Mr. Longdon's, Nanda approached Mitchy, whom she knows to be in love with her, and urges him, for his own sake and that of Aggie, to marry the Duchess' niece, thus effectually eliminating him as a candidate for her own hand. Mitchy, to gratify Nanda and to enjoy the only proximity of relation with her now open to him, that of simply being thoroughly together with her on the matter of Aggie, acquiesces to her promptings and reveals

his intentions to Van, indicating that the way is now completely open to the latter. Van, however, remains uncommitted and indecisive. The conversation ends rather darkly on the question of what Mr. Longdon will do for Nanda should Van fail to propose.

The climactic scene of the novel occurs several months later at Tishy Grendon's, where all the principal characters are gathered. At this time Nanda has been Mr. Longdon's guest for several months; Harold has ably distracted Lady Fanny from her design to run off with another gentleman; and Little Aggie, after her marriage, has been divested with a vengeance of her innocence and has taken up with her aunt's lover, Petherton. Mrs. Brook, in a tremendous scene, demands Nanda's return from Mr. Longdon and forces the public exposure of the group, climaxing her performance with the revelation that Nanda has read a scabrous French novel lent to her by Vanderbank, and has even pronounced it unfit for the presumably far more experienced Tishy to read. The effect is to reveal to Vanderbank the depths of knowledge already open to Nanda, depths in the unveiling of which he has been instrumental but which, with cruel irony, render her an impossible choice for his wife. Mrs. Brook, who knows her Van all too well, has eliminated the possibility of losing him to her daughter.

The scene at Tishy Grendon's, however, has served to destroy the solidarity of the group, and it is only after months that Van returns to Mrs. Brook's, supposedly to see Nanda but ultimately avoiding the chance to do so, an avoidance which Mrs. Brook interprets as his finally having given Nanda up. This information she enjoins Mitchy to give Mr. Longdon, for, as she has explained to her remarkably obtuse husband, her purpose in creating the horrid scene at Tishy's had been simply to confirm Mr. Longdon's belief that she and her world were impossible for Nanda and to insure his taking care of the girl.

The final "act" occurs two weeks later, with the overwrought and embarrassed Van making what is presumably his final visit to Nanda. Nanda, however, lets the now awkward young man off easily by assuming the role of herself being in the false position, and she generously entreats him not to desert her mother, a plea she repeats to Mitchy in her next interview. Finally there is only Mr. Longdon, and before him she breaks down in the fullness of her suffering. It is Little Aggie whom Vanderbank ought to have married, they agree. Only that innocence could have met his measure, though an innocence capable of becoming its own obverse at the first taste of experience. Even under such a circumstance, however, Mitchy would still have been totally out of the question for her; it has been his fate, as it has been Nanda's, to love only that person for whom he is an impossibility. Around the suffering Mitchy Nanda's thoughts revolve as she prepares to be taken away the following day by Mr. Longdon.

Turning as it seems to on the question of a girl's reading a questionable book, *The Awkward Age* may appear to the superficial glance as a period piece, elaborate and elegant, but without the reverberating significance of James's three final masterpieces. To see the novel in this light, however, is to neglect its hard and lucid inquiry into the coexistence of moral vision and the knowledge of a world seemingly its antithesis. Little Aggie is innocent of such knowledge, but her innocence is the merest ignorance of that which she will become. Paradoxically, Nanda's knowledge, the superficial taint as opposed to the inward blight, of the world in which she is so thoroughly implicated, a knowledge which is perhaps instrumental in creating Nanda's moral dimension, renders her unacceptable to Vanderbank. And yet if Nanda's magnanimous vision can exist only in her retreat with Mr. Longdon from the world, there is a sense in which she too, by her pressuring Mitchy into marrying Aggie,

has been implicated in the network of selfishness, guilt, and suffering which is perhaps the inevitable result of the brush of human contact.

Finally there is the pragmatism of the magnificent Mrs. Brook, the ability to make do in a world where one is unlikely to get what one wants. What Mrs. Brook wants is unquestionably Van. The book leaves the question moot whether they have ever been lovers, though most of evidence points to the fact that they have not. Her scene at Tishy Grendon's appears from one angle a wanton destruction of her daughter's hopes; yet, given her knowledge of Van's nature, a nature, it must be said, which contact with her has in no small measure formed, her

seemingly brutal actions may just as well be motivated, as she explains to Edward, by a desire to provide, no matter how deviously, for a daughter who has no other chance, to ensure for her the opening of an escape from a world which has already left its mark. To acknowledge that the selfish desire to retain Van for herself enters Mrs. Brook's design is only to admit the necessary multiplicity of motive inherent in taking any course of human action. Mrs. Brook's motives are decidedly mixed—and her awareness of the fact is part of her limited triumph. She provides the only alternative, if a partially cruel one, to the very different satisfactions offered by renunciation.

AXEL'S CASTLE

Type of work: Literary history and criticism

Author: Edmund Wilson (1895-)

First published: 1931

The subtitle of this volume, which has by now become a minor classic in American criticism, explains the author's purpose: to write a "study in the imaginative literature of 1870-1930"; and the dedicatory note, addressed to Christian Gauss of Princeton, explains the author's conception of "what literary criticism ought to be," that is, "a history of man's ideas and imaginings in the setting of the conditions which have shaped them." The book is, however, more limited than the subtitle might seem to indicate; it is actually a history of the Symbolist movement that began in France and spread to England and finally to America. The writers to whom Wilson directs his attention are Yeats, Valéry, Eliot, Proust, Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Rimbaud, although dozens of others are dealt with in greater or lesser detail.

The importance of the book becomes more apparent if the date of publication, 1931, is kept in mind, for we then realize to what an extent it was a pioneer work. In 1931, Proust, though certainly known

in this country, was read by only a few, and most of the critical articles dealing with his novel were in French. Maurois' *A la recherche de Marcel Proust* did not appear until 1949. Joyce's *Ulysses* was still unprocurable in the United States, for the famous decision of Judge Woolsey that permitted its publication was two years in the future. Matthiessen's *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* was still further off—1935. Rimbaud and Valéry were not, and still are not, much read in America. At the time Wilson was introducing a group of writers who were, for most readers, merely names, the exception being Yeats, and he was associated chiefly with *The Land of Heart's Desire* and a few early poems.

Wilson begins his history with a discussion of Neoclassicism in the eighteenth century, the era of the "geometrical plays of Racine and the balanced couplets of Pope." When this "conception of a fixed mathematical order" came to be considered as a constraint on the human spirit, we find ourselves in the Romantic

period, at which time the poet, looking into his own soul, saw "fantasy, conflict, confusion," and yet considered this vision as a truth superior to the mechanistic view held in the eighteenth century. Then came the scientific discoveries of the middle years of the nineteenth century (the most famous of which Darwin described in *On the Origin of Species*), which reduced man from the heroic being constructed by the Romantic imagination to a mere animal among other animals. From this point of view arose the literary movement known as Naturalism, associated chiefly with the novels of Zola, which maintained that man was merely the product of his heredity and environment and that, therefore, the plot of a novel was as inevitable in its working-out as was a problem in mathematics. In poetry, there was in France the school known as the Parnassians, whose aim it was to write poems that were purely objective descriptions of historic events or of scenic effects. The imagination, as we perhaps loosely call it, was rigorously excluded by the Naturalists from the novel and by the Parnassians from poetry.

Edmund Wilson traces the course of the Symbolist school, which was perhaps an inevitable reaction against the impersonality of Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia, from its origins in the work of Poe—first translated into French by Baudelaire—to its full development in the hands of Mallarmé and Valéry. Its aim "was the poet's task to find, to invent, the special language which will alone be capable of expressing his personality and feelings." The need of symbols by means of which the poet can attain this objective is obvious; equally obvious is the danger that such symbols may become so private as to render the poem unintelligible. The poet is now talking to himself in his special language. From this time on, unintelligibility is the charge most commonly brought against poetry.

Wilson next discusses the individual writers already listed, although they draw further and further away from the Sym-

bolist movement that was the start of the book. The early Yeats, of course, found a storehouse of symbols convenient to his hand in Irish mythology; he later added further items from his dabbings in cabalistic imagery. In the case of Eliot, Wilson shows his descent from a different branch of the Symbolist movement, that of Corbière and Laforgue, both of whom influenced the early work of the American poet. Then came *The Waste Land* in 1922, with its complicated and unfamiliar symbolism drawn from the Grail legends. As for Proust, Wilson considers him to have been "the first important novelist to apply the principles of Symbolism in fiction." With Proust we encounter the influence of Wagner, who, Wilson maintains, played as great a part in the history of this movement as did any poet. In *Remembrance of Things Past* the symbols are "characters, situations, places" used in an elaborate "symphonic structure" that takes the place of the narrative of the conventional novel. And the enormously involved Homeric symbolism of Joyce's *Ulysses* is, today, familiar to students of contemporary literature, though it was by no means familiar in 1931 when the only copies of the novel available were those smuggled into this country from France.

The reader of this book is constantly aware of Wilson's perceptiveness as a critic and interpreter of literature, his ability to untangle the skein of influences and cross-influences involved in the movement he is describing. Further, Wilson has always displayed great common sense; he was not so dazzled by the eminence of his subjects as to be oblivious of their shortcomings—the unnecessary elaboration of *Ulysses*, for example, or Joyce's use of technique for its own sake. Only in dealing with Eliot's *Ash Wednesday* did Wilson seem to go astray. Quite typically of the period, he could not accept the sincerity of Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism. It had to be "artificial" at a time, the early 1930's, marked by the high point of secular humanism in this country.

Last, but by no means least, the book is an example of the "old criticism" that in the best tradition of literary scholarship got its job done simply and directly without the use of a jargon so esoteric as to

require a glossary for its comprehension. *Axel's Castle* is a clear, lucid, and important book, considered by some readers to be the best that Edmund Wilson has written.

BAAL

Type of work: Drama

Author: Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

Time: c. 1911

Locale: Augsburg, Germany, and the surrounding region

First presented: 1926

Principal characters:

BAAL, a young poet

EKART, a composer, and homosexual friend of Baal

SOPHIE BARGER, a girl seduced by Baal

JOHANNES SCHMIDT, a friend of Baal

JOHANNA REIHER, Schmidt's fiancée, seduced by Baal

LOUISE, a waitress

MECH, a publisher

MRS. EMILY MECH, his wife, in love with Baal

DR. PILLAR, a critic

Baal, written in four days in 1918 but not produced until 1926, was Bertolt Brecht's first play. It is essentially a one-man play. Baal is a young, idolized poet driven madly through a short and tragicomic life by his insatiable passion for drink and for bisexual love. Its subject, said Brecht years later, is man's love of pleasure and his search for happiness.

Brecht's comment needs elucidation. His Baal does not represent man merely as hedonist. He is one of the archetypal figures to be found in literature and in life: the man who yields joyously to his inner drives, amoral and unconventional though they may be, while at the same time desperately trying to renounce this sort of existence and seek an idealized communion with nature and the powers behind nature. Earthy Baal aspires to spiritual ecstasy.

What the audience sees visually in Brecht's play is the earthy, sensual Baal—brandy in hand, perpetually in pursuit of young virgins. His drunken revels, rapes, and remorse provide the stage action as the setting shifts from bar to bedroom. What the audience hears, how-

ever, is the other Baal, the desperately aspiring young Baal. His yearning, poetic speeches comment at length, and too often, on the sky and stars, the river and the trees. Thus Baal represents man in conflict, wishing to glut himself with all worlds, all experiences, yet knowing and lamenting the impossibility of his desires.

By giving the name Baal to his focal character, Brecht has chosen to emphasize the sensual in this dual man. Baal was an ancient Semitic god of fertility. Especially because of Biblical associations, the name has implications of licentiousness and orgiastic religious rites. For its ultimately tragic ending Brecht chooses to make Baal a victim to this side of his dual nature.

In spirit the play has been influenced by Georg Büchner, the forerunner of German Expressionism, though critics insist that Brecht mocks the Expressionists in the play. Structurally and technically, the play is perfectly at home in the modern theater. It is not, for example, a "character study" in the traditional sense. Brecht is concerned with a stylized Baal, a man sharply divided between two as-

pects of his nature. Nuances of character and subtle shades of characterization are less his concern. Nor does Brecht try to integrate setting and time into the action of his play, in the traditional sense. He specifies a Black Forest locale and the year 1911, but this information is largely superfluous and irrelevant. Brecht is not concerned about the conventional division of a play into acts. His play has twenty-one loosely connected scenes, preceded by a musical prologue, the "Chorale of the Great Baal," a vigorous, bawdy ballad of fourteen quatrains sung by the full cast of Baal's assembled acquaintances.

The play is essentially a series of sharp vignettes, with the focus always on Baal, but with numerous satellite characters serving as friends, adulators, foils, and enemies. The action of the play begins with Baal's revelry and seductions and ends with Baal's killing of his closest friend Ekart and then Baal's death. The prologue is the one part of the play that harks back to old theatrical tradition. It sums up the action of the play and the character of Baal as fellow revelers tell how life was "when Baal lived with us."

Brecht remarked in 1926 that his play or "dramatic biography" was modeled on the life of a man who actually existed. This fact is a useful counterweight to the load of poetry and mythic overtones that Brecht makes the play carry.

The first two scenes at once reveal both sides of Baal. At a party in the first speech of the play he is offered a glass of wine. The conversation turns to praise of his songs and their great sense of life, and the scene concludes with Baal's earthy remarks to a publisher's wife. The wine-women-and-song motif thus briefly established, scene two replaces revelry with reverie. In Baal's attic room he lyrically tells a young friend, Johannes Schmidt, about the pleasures of love. The imagery is drawn from nature: holly tree, oranges, pond water, trees in the wind, coconuts. All the while Baal looks at the starlit sky through the window.

In succeeding scenes Baal's sense of life becomes more apparent. He appears first in a dive with a group of lusty and coarse teamsters to whom he reads his poems. Irresistibly drawn to pursue him here are a publisher's wife, Emily Mech, and Johannes' sweetheart, Johanna Reiher. Also attracted to him, but for homosexual purposes, is Ekart, a large, haggard fellow. He tells Baal to come away with him out into the roads and the sky and the forest, away from women.

At this point Baal's struggles with himself become clear and foreshadow the remainder of the play. Each of the competing alternatives has its vice and its virtue. Roaming away from society in the forests and rain with Ekart would be cleansing and invigorating, yet there is an abnormal relationship with Ekart involved. Daily dissipation with his legion of admirers in Augsburg would soon be physically ruinous, yet here is the exuberant vitality and the normal relationships that Baal has thrived on.

Deferring a commitment, Baal one April day seduces Johanna. Later on in the same day, two young sisters come to him to be seduced and he learns of Johanna's suicide. At evening, self-pitying and insatiable, he goes out and finds a virgin, Sophie Barger, to seduce.

Sophie is particularly useful as an opportunity for Brecht to display his comic talent. In mood the play moves from exuberance to despair, and Sophie is one of Brecht's devices for establishing the early exuberance. She is an amusing hypocrite who wants to be seduced but will not admit the fact. Baal's teasing establishes a comic peak which is not reached again in the play. When we encounter her next, in Scene Six, she has been with Baal for three weeks and has abandoned her hypocrisy in favor of natural and joyful eroticism.

We then see Baal as a hired singer in a cheap café. He is tired and bored with this restraint on his freedom. One evening he departs from the specified songs and bursts into obscene lyrics. Taking his

guitar, he flees the enraged audience and the proprietor, and escapes through the washroom. Asocial Baal then goes off with his "brother," Ekart.

In the scenes that follow Baal continues his quest for varied experiences. Along with Ekart, he has nature, village farmers, and lumberjacks as his companions. He tricks the farmers into bringing their best bulls to town, on the pretext that Ekart wishes to buy one. The local pastor appears on the scene to chide Baal for his joke, and the fun at once collapses. This lapse into somberness continues in the scene with the lumberjacks. Teddy, one of Baal's friends, has died. Having worked for a while with these men, he is one of them, and together they mourn the death of Teddy. Baal, who had finished off Teddy's brandy while his friend was dying, is angered by their sanctimoniousness and tries to make them understand his own higher values. He tells them to look at the darkening sky and the trees.

Baal's own religion of nature and the following of natural impulses give rise to conflict in his mind and mood. He is torn once more between his desire for Sophie and his intense friendship for Ekart. So far he has kept faith with both; now the time has come when each demands his whole self. He leaves Sophie alone pleading as he goes off with Ekart to camp under the stars.

With Scene Thirteen we are reminded again that Brecht's method is to focus on vignette scenes rather than on character growth or action of cause and effect. Seven years have passed. New characters appear, a family of ugly, sick beggars, with ugly names. Baal and Ekart burst in upon them in a hospital tavern. There is wild talk, stimulated by Baal's cham-

pagne. Baal is reminded of the beautiful past and is told that the most beautiful thing of all is Nothing.

Such wisdom of madmen is uncomfortable to Baal and Ekart. Baal, after his quick and bittersweet glance into the past, turns from it and summons Ekart with the declaration that they will wash themselves clean in the river.

The next four scenes are set in nature—thicket, willows, hazel bushes, maple trees. These pastoral settings have the ironic function of foreshadowing death. Baal's desire for the cleansing river turns out to be in a sense his death wish.

In the thicket the movement toward final destruction states itself plainly as Baal makes his long-deferred commitment to Ekart. In the next scene, at night in the willows the dead Johanna haunts Baal. Then in the hazel bushes Baal makes one final seduction, quickly, unromantically, and mechanically. Under the maples Baal sings his newest poem: "Death in the Forest."

The play now moves rapidly to the fore-ordained tragic end. After eight years Baal's life comes full circle, and he returns to the barroom of Scene Three. He sees that all is decrepit, and his old acquaintances see that he himself is going to waste. He sings a pathetic song, lamenting his birth and his frantic life. In a sudden brawl he wounds Ekart. He flees into the forest and watches the vultures overhead waiting for him. One of the rangers seeking him for the murder of Ekart declares that Baal belongs to the animal kingdom. He finds refuge in a dirty log cabin among unfriendly drunken men. He has no identification papers. In the end he crawls out of the cabin, apparently to die friendless and alone.

THE BACHELORS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Muriel Spark (1918-)

Time: The present

Locale: London

First published: 1961

Principal characters:

RONALD BRIDGES, assistant curator at a London museum of graphology, an epileptic

MARTIN BOWLES, a barrister

PATRICK SETON, a spiritualistic medium charged with fraudulent conversion

ALICE DAWES, his mistress, a pregnant, diabetic waitress

ELSIE FORREST, her friend

MRS. FREDA FLOWER, a wealthy widow interested in spiritualism

MRS. MARLENE COOPER, the patroness of a spiritualistic group

TIM RAYMOND, her nephew

EWART THORTON, a teacher

WALTER PRETT, an art critic

MATTHEW FINCH, the London correspondent of the *Irish Echo*

DR. MIKE GARLAND, a clairvoyant

FATHER T. W. SOCKETT, a spiritualistic clergyman ordained by Fire and the Holy Ghost

THE HONORABLE FRANCIS ECCLES, a British Council lecturer

MR. FERGUSON, a detective inspector of police

There are times when the novels of Muriel Spark suggest a mildly hallucinated card game in which the dealer declares the trump suit only after the last card has been played and then proceeds to take in all the tricks. This is not to say that she cheats or ignores the rules of the fictional game she is playing, only that she adds to her picture of the world some element of unearthly surprise or presents her people from an odd angle of vision in order to throw an oblique light on the troubled condition of man and, since she is a Christian writer, on his relation to God or to the devil. All of her novels deal in one degree or another with the problem of faith: the grace with which men accept it or the ways by which they try to evade it. The result is a body of work which cannot be mistaken for that of anyone else writing today. Miss Spark is an original.

Satire is the literary climate in which her lively art appears to flourish best. But satire touched with fantasy or the supernatural is always a risky business. It demands, among other things, a sharp wit and a spirited style. There must also be sufficient involvement for the reader to make him go along with the game of pre-

tense, and the story must make its point if he is to accept it as an insightful comment on the absurdities of the material world or the mysteries of the soul.

Miss Spark takes her risks deliberately. Her first novel, *The Comforters*, relied for much of its effect on ghostly presences and double identities; in one scene a character heard the clatter of the author's typewriter at work on the book. *Robinson* brought into congruous relationship such disparate elements as a desert island, a murder, and a spiritual dilemma resolved in a rather bizarre fashion. However, *Memento Mori* was the novel in which Miss Spark revealed to the fullest the audacity, altogether her own, which promises to become the guiding principle of her fiction. In this book Death is a disembodied voice on the telephone, calling a group of old people and reminding them that they must die; what this chilling fable offers is a contrast between the selfish, trivial concerns of these people's lives and the inescapable fact of their mortality. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* brings to the pubs and rooming houses of a London suburb a devil incarnate, if not the devil in person, who provides the people of Peckham with oppor-

tunities to display mankind's natural capacity for error and evil. By means of devices such as these Miss Spark shows a critical and moral imagination at work among observations of the clutter and waste of the contemporary scene.

The Bachelors is more restrained. It contains no open struggle with otherworldly forces, whether of God or of the devil, and the only touch of the supernatural comes when a quack spiritualistic medium does, apparently, establish communication with the dead in an episode so briefly presented that it gives little weight to Miss Spark's swiftly paced and crowded narrative. In this novel her *deus ex machina* is bachelordom, the non-community of the unattached, uncommitted male. Here the bachelor's state is viewed as damnation, and for the ten examples she presents the writer provides an atmosphere of fearful reality. The lodgings in which they live, the pubs they frequent, the stores where they shop, their problems with meals, mothers, and girls—all are images of the private hells of loneliness and trivial self-preoccupation in which each revolves. This vision is one that the more discerning of her bachelors share with their creator. Matthew Finch, who is Irish, Catholic, and plagued by sex, says that one's duty is to marry, to choose between Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony. Anything else, and he speaks from experience, is an unnatural life for a Christian. Ronald Bridges, a graphologist disappointed, because he is an epileptic, in his desire to become a priest, claims that he is a confirmed bachelor, but at the end of the novel he experiences a vision of the bachelor's selfish and uneasy life on the fringes of society: seventeen point one bachelors to each of London's 38,500 streets, restless, awake, active with their bed partners, or asleep, all over the city.

In this non-community the solitaries try to find substitutes for solidarity and faith. Some, like Ronald Bridges, find another vocation. Others, like Martin Bowles, become social and moral hypo-

crites. Still others, like Walter Prett, revile the world out of drunken self-pity. A few, like Patrick Seton, prey on human credulity. Most, like Matthew Finch, simply struggle. His predicament is amusing but nonetheless real because he is trapped between spirit and flesh.

The uses to which Miss Spark puts her social outsiders are crafty and entertaining. Patrick Seton, the fraudulent medium, is charged with converting to his own needs two thousand pounds that Mrs. Freda Flower, a rich widow, had given him for the work of The Wider Community, a spiritualistic group. Mrs. Flower and another patroness of the circle, Mrs. Marlene Cooper, are already rivals for the place of leadership within the group, and the charge against Seton further widens the split. Mrs. Cooper sees in the division an opportunity to direct the Inner Spiral, a secret group within The Wider Community; Mrs. Flower hopes to bring the members under the influence of Dr. Mike Garland, a clairvoyant of notorious reputation, and his friend Father Sockett, another medium. Ronald Bridges becomes involved because he is the friend of Tim Raymond, Mrs. Cooper's nephew, and because as a handwriting expert he has been asked to testify to the authenticity of a letter forged by Seton. Other complications arise because Martin Bowles, who is also Bridges' friend, is the prosecuting counsel against Seton and Matthew Finch has fallen deeply in love with Alice Dawes, Seton's pregnant mistress. Through information innocently supplied by Matthew, Elsie Forrest, Alice's friend, is able to steal the letter from Bridges' lodgings. Meanwhile Garland and Father Sockett are also after the letter for reasons of their own.

Miss Spark handles this complicated material with customary skill and dash. Patrick Seton is convicted of forgery and sentenced to five years. Matthew will marry Alice. Ronald Bridges will continue to suffer the demoniac nightmares of his epileptic seizures. They are his cross, but because of them he has

achieved a kind of wisdom and insight into the need of faith and the grace of compassion. This, one feels, is the meaning of Miss Spark's concluding paragraphs. But she is too much the artist to flog a thesis or to point a moral. Her people are good, foolish, sinister, kind. They exist larger than life, illuminative of life, because they are self-contained in a world where sin and salvation coexist in precarious balance. It is a world where a man must earn the right to share commitment

to his fellows or to God. This writer handles serious matters with a light but sure touch.

All of Miss Spark's novels create an effect of wild improvisation. Actually the opposite is true. They have been carefully planned, cleanly structured, and lucidly styled. Few writers of the present time have a surer hold on the comic convention of the English novel which brings the fantastic and the real together in a coherent whole.

THE BELL

Type of work: Novel

Author: Iris Murdoch (1919-)

Time: The present

Locale: Imber Court, England

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

MICHAEL MEADE, the owner of Imber Court and leader of the lay religious community

JAMES TAYPER PACE, an energetic settlement worker

CATHERINE FAWLEY, a girl about to enter a nunnery

NICK FAWLEY, her drunken, malicious brother

PAUL GREENFIELD, an art historian

DORA GREENFIELD, his restless, unhappy wife

TOBY GASHE, a young student

MOTHER CLARE, the abbess of Imber Abbey

Iris Murdoch has the habit of seizing upon her material with a grasp so vigorous and complete that she is capable of an amazing variety of effects—joy, farce, grotesquerie, wit, violence, tenderness—always with shrewd insight into the oddities and frailties of the human animal. The result is that her novels exhibit a kind of thoroughgoingness rare in contemporary fiction, where most writers are satisfied to present only a fragmented view of experience or to achieve a picture of life in one of its familiar but flattish aspects, such as social criticism, character painting, psychological analysis, symbolic context, or another of the well-charted courses that the novel has followed in the two-hundred-odd years of its history.

Because she is able to surround a subject rather than approach it, it is safe to say that Miss Murdoch is the only writer

among her English contemporaries who could have written a novel as richly detailed, as complex in theme and symbolism, and, in the final analysis, as completely satisfying as *The Bell*. In the first place, the book is remarkable for its weaving in of fourteenth century legend, which brings medievalistic overtones of faith, damnation, and doom to the modern situation. Second, it is a novel of brilliant wit, a work in which the spirit of comedy presides, aloof and impartial, over the efforts of some earnest but misguided souls to find their way to the good life in a world where escape into a William Morris Utopia is no longer possible. Third, *The Bell* is an excellent example of the planned novel; themes and motifs appear early in the story, only to be dropped and later resumed, like the motifs of a fugue, with each development of

the plot related by some recurring emotion or observation. And fourth, the novel is a work in which secondary and multiple meanings, reflected in imagery and symbolism, give the story its depth and weight of philosophical and moral seriousness.

If the real qualities of Miss Murdoch's art were not apparent in her earlier novels, the reason was that they seemed on the surface a form of academic entertainment, the kind of novel, in other words, that one might expect from a young woman of intellect and wit who lectured in philosophy at Oxford University. Also, in *Under the Net* there was a suggestion of Kingsley Amis and John Wain in her picture of a romantic-minded young man who finally comes to common-sense, if rather irreverent, terms with his cultural environment; the end result suggested a blend of English-bred existentialism and social satire. *The Flight from the Enchanter* fared little better. It was read and praised without real appreciation of the paradox it presented in the writer's handling of the problem of evil and the subtlety of her defense of God's ways to man. *The Sandcastle* was the novel which won for Miss Murdoch critical acclaim and public response. A gentler book than its predecessors, with fewer effects of the symbolic and the bizarre, it was no less rigorous as a study of the romantic idealist confronted by truth and forced to accept the responsibility it imposes. It is now apparent that through these novels Miss Murdoch was developing her command of humor, symbolism, character insights, and philosophical concept, qualities which in *The Bell* bring her into the front rank of her literary contemporaries.

The central situation of this novel reveals a mixture of the touching and the ridiculous. At Imber Court, a Palladian mansion located across the lake from Imber Abbey, which houses a group of Anglican Benedictine nuns, a group of social and spiritual misfits have set up a community of their own. Their reasons for

withdrawal from the world are at least valid, a fact recognized by Mother Clare, abbess of the cloister of Anglican nuns, who says that there are many people in the world today who can neither live in it nor out of it. Soul-sick, they find no real home for their disturbed souls. The trouble is that the members of the Imber Court community represent the spiritual ruling caste which can neither take the world nor leave it alone, so that their withdrawal in search of happiness and peace ends in trivial gestures: a belief that to have flowers in one's room would be frivolous and debates on whether to sow seed by hand or to use a mechanical cultivator.

The leader of the ill-assorted group is Michael Meade, an unhappy, desperate man who had studied for the priesthood but whose sense of vocation failed when he discovered in himself a drive toward homosexuality. Other members include James Tapper Pace, a muscular idealist and a believer in the church militant, who had discovered his career and creed while founding boys' settlement houses in the East End slums; Catherine Fawley, a quiet, brooding girl who is about to become a novitiate in the nunnery; her brother Nick, a middle-aged, neurotic drunk whose emotional background is as ambiguous and disturbed as Meade's; Toby Gashe, an eighteen-year-old innocent whom Pace has brought to Imber Court for a few weeks of rest and meditation before he enters Oxford; a commonplace couple trying to salvage their marriage by contemplation and prayer; Paul Greenfield, a brutal antiquarian and art historian staying at Imber Court while working on the old Abbey records, and his wife Dora, who has joined her husband, whom she fears and hates, after becoming bored with the fun and games of marital infidelity in London.

The moral and physical dissolution of this community becomes involved with the plan to install a new bell at the Abbey. According to legend, in the fourteenth century one of the Imber nuns

had taken a lover who one night broke his neck in a fall. Unable to discover the guilty nun through confession, the bishop charged with cloister discipline cursed the Abbey and its bell had flown from its tower and fallen into the lake. The Imber community believes that the new bell will give spiritual significance to their communal testing. Then the old bell is accidentally discovered by Toby Gashe and he and Dora plan to substitute it for the new bell that has been ordered, a design that has ridiculous and startling results when the two, in a passionate embrace within the old bell, cause the clapper to give off a clang that arouses the whole community. Their plan to effect a fake miracle, however, is not the act that destroys the community. The true villain is Nick Fawley, who manages to distort Meade's sincere liking for Toby into a more sinister feeling, so that Meade finds himself once more involved in the same torment that he had suffered years before in his relations with Nick.

Once the process of disintegration begins, it rapidly gains momentum as the characters explode in fits of anger, mystery, and melancholy among themselves. Nick, hoping to bring the community to ridicule, weakens the causeway and the bell again falls into the lake. His plan to frighten his sister out of her intention to

enter the nunnery ends in her attempted suicide and later madness, a state brought on by her inherent neuroticism and her secret love for Meade. The community is dissolved, but not before Nick himself has committed suicide. As both destroyer and destroyed, Nick points to the underlying themes of this novel, the corruption of innocence and the burden of ancient guilt symbolized by the bell. Yet the situation has its survivors on the plane of moral perception: Michael Meade because the experience has taught him how one may best use his moral strength, Dora because she realizes that her earlier efforts to escape her pompous, sadistic husband were no escape at all and that she must now face up to the failure of her marriage.

The Bell is beautifully organized, dramatic in story, rich in symbolism, absorbing in ideas. There is no chilling intellectualism in Miss Murdoch's skillful handling of her moral theme, no difficulties in her use of image and symbol. Her book is firmly grounded in the realities of time and place, not in fine-drawn abstractions. It is a work of physical and imaginative reality by a writer who views life with passionate concern for man's mortality and humorous appreciation of his illusions.

THE BIBLE IN SPAIN

Type of work: Travel journal

Author: George Henry Borrow (1803-1881)

First published: 1842

Principal personages:

GEORGE HENRY BORROW, the narrator

ANTONIO BUCHINI, Borrow's servant and colporteur

MARIA DIAZ, Borrow's landlady and adviser

George Borrow labored in darkest Spain for nearly five years, from 1835 to 1839, as the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in printing and setting (with another agent) thirty thousand copies in Spanish of the New Testament, a book proscribed by the *Index*.

This remarkable achievement in the face of determined and unscrupulous opposition by the Roman Catholic hierarchy is more the background than the subject of *The Bible in Spain*, a detailed record of dangerous missionary work which begins and ends abruptly and is often a daily ac-

count of Borrow's travels. It is pervaded by his delight in his remarkably efficient grasp of Spanish, his stamina, his defiance of authority, and the individuals he met during "the most happy years of my existence," as he says in his preface.

Borrow was thirty-two when he went to Spain and forty when he published the book that launched his literary career. After twenty-nine years of roaming around England (sometimes with gipsies) and cultivating his linguistic abilities—at eighteen he knew thirteen languages, including Welsh and a gipsy dialect—in 1832 he found his vocation in being employed by the Bible Society to supervise the printing of a Manchu version of the New Testament in St. Petersburg and to arrange for its distribution across the Russian border into China. Tsarist opposition killed the project, but the efficient Bible Society decided that Spain was as good a field as China and conditions were favorable for its work there, for in the civil war then raging the monarchy was largely supported by English arms. A version of the Bible in Castilian had been printed by 1793; if this could be cheaply reprinted and widely distributed the work of the society would raise Spain to the level of Portugal, where Portuguese versions of the Bible were already in circulation.

In November, 1835, Borrow arrived in Lisbon on his way to Spain, a month after he had left Russia. His stay in Spain was broken by two visits to London, the first late in 1836, after his exploration of the official position in Madrid, when he returned for instructions; the second, when he fell ill in August, 1838, after nearly two years in Spain. He returned to Spain late in 1838 to carry on the work so energetically that growing clerical opposition finally defied the British ambassador and insisted that Borrow, his books, and the Society leave Spain in August, 1839. Borrow got most of his Testaments out and distributed some in Tangier before returning to England.

There he completed *The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain*, which he had drafted while in Spain. He married a widow of comfortable means and settled down to the life of a gentleman author by writing *The Bible in Spain*. Its successful publication established his vocation and formed the narrative style and episodic structure he would use later in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*. Embittered at the reception of these books, he confined himself thereafter to infrequent publication, generally translations or philology, with the exception of *Wild Wales*, which has more in common with *The Bible in Spain* than with his books on gipsy life and character.

Three things interested Borrow: eccentric characters, dangerous situations, and philological curiosities. In these preferences he exhibits his romantic nature, further shown in the supremely confident way he coped with all characters and situations; he warns the governor of the prison in Madrid that he is delighted to be incarcerated so that he can learn the argot of the thieves of Madrid; he visits the tombs of Fielding at Lisbon and Moore at Corunna and apostrophizes them as a true-born Englishman would; he goes all the way to Cape Finisterre to leave a Testament at the end of the Old World. The rapid succession of episodes and characters is indicated in the subtitle—"The Journeys, Adventures, and Imprisonments of an Englishman in an attempt to circulate the Scriptures in Spain"—and in the more than five hundred subheadings to each of the fifty-seven chapters. He arranges the incidents chronologically, helped by his journals and reports to the Society, although, as he says, "the greater part . . . has been supplied from memory." The result is that only his journeys are fully described. It took three months to print the first edition of five thousand copies of the Testament in Madrid in 1837, an event which, he observes, "could possess but little interest for the reader." All three periods in Spain

involved exciting journeys, and these he records in daily installments, along with any general observations on politics, religion, language, gipsies, horses, inns, and roads. (For much of this material an index would be helpful and an annotated edition is essential to understanding the book.)

The first trip took twelve weeks, from November, 1835, to February, 1836, when with help from gipsies he crossed from Lisbon to Madrid via Badajoz. The wolves, robbers, and Jews he meets on the way equally fascinate Borrow. The British ambassador, to whom Borrow later dedicated *The Zincali*, helped him, as did highly placed friends who were impressed more with the commercial than with the military power of England and felt it was in some way connected with the free circulation of the Bible there. Borrow thought his way was clear when the Prime Minister verbally authorized his printing the Spanish Testament, but a week later that government was overthrown in riots Borrow observed from an upper window. He returned to London for instructions but by November, 1836, he was in Cadiz and four weeks later, after prospecting Seville and Cordova, he was in Madrid. The British ambassador, the Bible Society, and Borrow agreed that further delay for official permission would be wasteful; the Testament was edited and printed. Then began Borrow's most important period in Spain and his longest journey.

Borrow left Madrid with his faithful servant, a Greek named Antonio Buchini, on May 25, 1837; he was not to return until four months later, in the meantime covering about one thousand miles in the northern and northwestern provinces of Galicia, the Asturias, and Old Castile. During his journey he visited all the principal cities to establish depots of the Testament at the leading booksellers. On the whole he found they favored his plans, being of moderate, radical, or national sympathies, though he

occasionally met government or clerical opposition and had trouble with the Carlist or rebel troops and with suspicious villagers. It is obvious that this was the kind of adventure Borrow loved; he was at heart a smuggler and he could indulge this longing in defying a worthy opponent on the highest moral grounds. Borrow, in fact, saw himself in personal combat with the Pope of Rome for the souls of the Spaniards. Furthermore, he was always on the move and he loved that gipsy way of life.

On his return to Madrid he was imprisoned, to the great embarrassment of the authorities and eventually of the priests, and his distribution of the Testaments, which he had by now produced in gipsy and Basque versions, was stopped. Nothing daunted, he seized the suggestion of his landlady, the remarkable Maria Diaz, and began selling his wares throughout the small villages in the Toledo and La Granja districts, some thirty miles from Madrid; at three *reals* (thirty farthings) he found numerous buyers, and he records selling twenty-five in half an hour and over five hundred in a week. Keeping up his supplies by smuggling in consignments was difficult, but he felt his labors amply repaid when he frequently observed the Testament being read to groups who had never heard it, or heard of it, before. He fell ill in August, 1838, and returned to England, but in January, 1839, he was back in Madrid to carry on his personal sales in the face of increasingly effective opposition. For the third time he changed his tactics and decided to sell on the streets of the capital. He had now discovered a flaw in his operations: the demand for Bibles, which were too bulky to print and distribute clandestinely, exceeded that for the New Testament, for much of the New is inexplicable except in the light of the Old, and neither was familiar to the Spanish people. He apparently acquiesced in the government seizure of all his stock and was thankful to get out of Spain with the

remaining Testaments which he left at Gibraltar and Tangier. His "labors in the field" were now concluded.

It is impossible to estimate the value of

Borrow's work in Spain. The most concrete and obvious achievement in this vivid record of his adventures there.

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

Type of work: Intellectual autobiography

Author: Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

First published: 1817

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* begins as an account of the major influences on the development of his philosophy and his literary technique, but the total effect of the work is considerably less coherent than this plan would indicate. As he progressed the author apparently altered his purpose, and he discussed at considerable length intellectual problems of special interest to him and gave some of his standards of literary criticism with comments on specific works. In his opening paragraph he speaks of his work as "miscellaneous reflections"; the description seems appropriate.

The loose rambling structure of the *Biographia Literaria* accords well with the picture of Coleridge that has been handed down, that of a man of great intellectual and poetic gifts who lacked the self-discipline to produce the works of which he seemed capable. Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt both characterized him as an indefatigable and fascinating talker, full of ideas, and this trait, too, plays its part in the creation of the *Biographia Literaria*, which is, in essence, a long conversation, ranging widely over the worlds of poetry, drama, philosophy, and psychology. The lack of a tight organizational plan in no way prevents the book from being both readable and profound in its content; Coleridge's comments on the nature of the poetic imagination have never been surpassed, and his criticism of Wordsworth's work is still perhaps the most balanced and judicious assessment available, a model for all scholars who seek to form general views

on the basis of close examination of individual texts.

In the opening chapter Coleridge pays tribute to his most influential teacher, the Reverend James Bowyer of Christ's Hospital, who insisted that his students learn to think logically and use language precisely, in poetry as well as in prose. Coleridge also discusses the poetry he preferred in the years when his literary tastes were being formed; he turned toward the "pre-romantic" lyrics of minor writers rather than to the terse, epigrammatic intellectual poems of the best-known of the eighteenth century literary men, Alexander Pope and his followers. At an early stage he developed sound critical principles, looking for works that gained in power through rereading and for words that seemed to express ideas better than any phrases substituted for them could, and he quickly learned to distinguish between the virtues of works of original ideas and the faults of those that made their effect through novel phraseology. He confesses, however, that his critical judgment was better than his creative talent: his own early poems, though he thought highly of them when he wrote them, left much to be desired.

The harshness of critics in his time is a recurrent theme throughout Coleridge's autobiography, and in his second chapter he ponders on the tendency of the public to side with them rather than with the poets, who are considered to be strange, irritable, even mad. Yet the greatest writers, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, seem to him unusually well-

balanced, and he suggests that the popular heresy results from the frustrations of the second-rate writer who pursues fame without real talent. These general comments are closely linked to Coleridge's sense of injustice at the vituperative attacks on him that issued regularly from the pages of the popular reviews, partly as a result of his association with Wordsworth and Robert Southey. The three poets were accused of trying to revolutionize, to vulgarize, poetry; they were avowedly interested in freeing poetry from the limitations of the eighteenth century poetic tradition. Coleridge denies that they deserved the abuses hurled at them.

After making some comments on the works of Wordsworth and Southey, Coleridge turns to a number of philosophical problems that fascinated him, questions of perception, sensation, and the human thought processes. It is this section of his work that provides the greatest difficulty for the uninitiated reader, for he assumes considerable familiarity with the works of German philosophers and English psychologists and mystics. He surveys the theories of Thomas Hobbes, David Hartley, Aristotle, Descartes, and others as they relate to problems of perception and of the development of thought through the association of ideas, and he assesses the influence of Immanuel Kant on his own philosophy.

Coleridge digresses from the complex history of his intellectual growth to describe his first literary venture into the commercial side of his world, his publication of a periodical called *The Watchman*. His attempts to secure subscriptions were ludicrous, and his project met with the failure that his friends had predicted; one of them had to pay his printer to keep him out of debtors' prison.

One of the most important periods in Coleridge's life was his 1798 trip to Germany, where he widened his knowledge of the literature and philosophy of that country. He returned to England to take a position with a newspaper, writing on

literature and politics; he attacked Napoleon so vociferously that the French general actually sent out an order for his arrest while he was living in Italy as a correspondent for his paper. Coleridge evidently enjoyed his journalistic work, and he advises all would-be literary men to find some regular occupation rather than to devote all their time to writing.

Returning to his philosophical discussion, Coleridge lists several of his major premises about truth and knowledge. He is particularly concerned with distinguishing between the essence of the subject, the perceiver, and of the object, that which is perceived. Related to this distinction is the nature of the imagination, which Coleridge divides into two parts. The primary imagination is that power in man which perceives and recognizes objects; the secondary imagination acts on these initial perceptions to produce new thoughts: "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create."

Coleridge next turns to a presentation of his literary standards, referring especially to the *Lyrical Ballads*, the volume containing much of Wordsworth's poetry and some of his own. He tries to define poetry, pointing out that it has as its "immediate object pleasure, not truth," and that it delights by the effect of the whole, as well as of individual parts. In one of the most famous passages in the book he discusses the function of the poet who, by the power of his imagination, must bring unity out of diversity, reconciling "sameness, with differences; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement."

Coleridge applies these general tenets to specific works, analyzing Shakespeare's early poems, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis* to determine what in them reveals genius and what is the re-

sult of the poet's immaturity. He praises particularly Shakespeare's musical language and his distance from his subject matter, saying, with reference to the latter point, that the average youthful writer is likely to concentrate on his own sensations and experiences. Shakespeare's greatness seems to him to lie, too, in the vividness of his imagery and in his "depth, and energy of thought."

While he was closely associated with Wordsworth in the creation of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge does not hesitate to indicate the points at which he differed from his colleague. He takes issue most strongly with Wordsworth's assertion that the speech of low and rustic life is the natural language of emotion and therefore best for poetry. Coleridge stresses rather the choice of a diction as universal as possible, not associated with class or region, and he says that it is this kind of language that Wordsworth has, in fact, used in almost all of his work. He feels that in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth was, to a certain extent, exaggerating in order to make clear advantages of natural, clear language over the empty poetic diction of the typical poetry of the time.

Coleridge's comments on Wordsworth lead him to an extended attack on the practices of the critical reviews, whose commentary on his friend's works seems to him both biased and absurd. He ridicules the tendency of anonymous reviewers to offer criticism without giving examples to support their assertions; they hardly seem to have read the works they lampoon. So as to counteract their ill-tempered, inconsistent judgments he sets down his own views on Wordsworth's most serious flaws and his outstanding talents. He criticizes his "inconstancy of the style," a tendency to shift from a lofty

level to a commonplace one; his occasionally excessive attention to factual details of landscape or biography; his poor handling of dialogue in some poems; his "occasional prolixity, repetition, and an edifying instead of progression of thought" in a few passages; and, finally, his use of "thoughts and images too great for the subject."

With these defects in mind Coleridge commends Wordsworth's work for the purity and appropriateness of its language, the freshness of the thoughts, the "sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs," the accuracy of the descriptions of nature, the pathos and human sympathy, and the imaginative power of the poet.

The major portion of the *Biographia Literaria* ends with a final assessment of Wordsworth's work. However, Coleridge has added, in order to give the reader a picture of his early maturity, a group of letters written to friends while he was traveling in Germany, containing amusing accounts of his shipboard companions, his meeting with the famous poet Klopstock, and some of his literary opinions. To show how little his critical standards had changed, he also included a long and devastating critique of a contemporary melodrama, *Bertram, or the Castle of St. Aldobrand*, an essay published just before the *Biographia Literaria*.

Coleridge's concluding chapter, as rambling in subject matter as the rest of the book, treats briefly the harsh critical reaction to his poem, *Christabel*, then turns to his affirmation of his Christian faith and his reasons for holding it. He makes no attempt to summarize his volume, which has presented a remarkably full portrait of his wide-ranging, questioning mind.

THE BLACK SWAN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Thomas Mann (1875-1955)

Time: The 1920's

Locale: Düsseldorf, Germany

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

FRAU ROSALIE VON TÜMMLER, a middle-aged widow

ANNA, her spinster daughter

EDUARD, her teen-aged son

KEN KEATON, a young American who tutors Eduard in English

The Black Swan is a slight work coming after the novels of vast and complicated design which marked Thomas Mann's later period—works such as *Joseph and His Brothers*, and *Doctor Faustus*. Its structure is that of the novella, the brief narrative form in which Mann worked so successfully in *Tonio Kröger* and *Death in Venice*. As he demonstrates in this and in the earlier stories, he does not need breadth to give his writing the effect of depth and insight.

In this novel readers familiar with Mann's work are likely to be reminded of *Death in Venice*, that wonderful short novel dealing with the dissolution of personality and with death in a plague-stricken pleasure resort on the Adriatic. Here Mann returns, but with different treatment, to the symbolism of his earlier tale. *The Black Swan* presents on several planes of meaning the writer's favorite themes of life and death, body and soul, nature and spirit, art and decay, love and death. At the same time his sense of ironic detachment and the deliberate parody of his style make this one of the most puzzling books of his career.

During the 1920's Frau Rosalie von Tümmler was living in Düsseldorf with her spinster daughter Anna and her teen-age son Eduard. Widowed for more than a decade, Frau von Tümmler had been the wife of a German lieutenant general killed in action in 1914. After his death she had retired to the small villa in Düsseldorf, partly for the beautiful parks in which she could indulge her love for nature. There she had many friends of her own age and older, and she believed her life quite happy. She had always been attractive to men, but as the time for her change of life neared she and Anna were

drawn closer to each other. Anna, born with a clubfoot, had always been cut off from companions of her own age. She was an artist, an abstract painter. Rosalie was often dismayed by her daughter's canvases of mathematical or symbolic designs, but she always tried to understand what Anna was trying to express. On their walks together they had many long talks on nature and art. Sometimes Rosalie complained that nature was cheating her by taking away her function as a woman while her body remained youthful-looking and her mind as active as ever. Anna tried to convince her that body and soul would soon be brought into harmony by psychological changes following physical ones.

Rosalie was fifty when she hired Ken Keaton, a young American, to give Eduard lessons in English. Keaton was a veteran who had chosen to live in Europe after the war. Like most expatriates of his generation, he spoke of his own country as a place of shoddy materialism, a land which in its pursuit of dollars had lost all respect for the arts of living. His interest in Rhineland history had brought him to Düsseldorf, where he supported himself by tutoring the wives and children of well-to-do burghers.

Keaton brought a different spirit of youthfulness and vitality into the Tümmler household. Rosalie used to listen outside her son's room to the snatches of conversation and the bursts of laughter she could hear from within; after a time the young American was accepted as a friend of the family. Before long Rosalie realized that she was falling in love with the virile young man. Anna, watching what was happening, was greatly disturbed by this promise of her mother's

autumnal romance, especially so when Rosalie announced triumphantly that nature had given her a second period of physical flowering by renewing her fertile cycles. Rejoicing in what she believed a miracle of rejuvenation, Rosalie refused to listen to her daughter's warnings.

Early in the spring the Tümmers and Keaton went on an outing to Holterhof Castle, a rococo structure not far from the city. Rosalie was pleased to show the young American the castle and the park, for in them had been preserved the spirit of earlier German culture. Keaton had brought some stale bread to feed the black swans on the castle lake. Rosalie took some of the bread and nibbled at it playfully while one of the giant swans hissed indignantly for his dinner. Later, in a secret alcove of the chilly, musty old castle, she threw her arms about the young man and embraced him. On the way home she decided that she would give herself to Keaton without reserve.

But she never offered him the gift of a renewed youth. That night she was taken suddenly ill and hurriedly removed to the hospital, where an examination revealed that she was suffering from a deadly cancer. Nature had played on her the cruellest of jokes—the signs of renewed fertility had been nothing more than the symptoms of coming death.

This story is simple almost to the point of banality. If *The Black Swan* were a book to be read for the story only, there would be little in it to command our attention. But Mann is never simple in that way. By manipulation of symbols and repetition of key words and phrases that linger in the memory like motifs in music, he gives his narrative more than one level of meaning. Here ambiguity enters. In one sense *The Black Swan* is a fable of the way in which the creative spirit often dies, its late-flowering resurgence often no more than a prelude to death. But the symbolism of death and decay points also to an interpretation of Rosalie as twentieth century Europe, an

aging continent weakened by disease from within but finding in the symptoms of its corrupted state an urge to self-destructive vitality. Images of death are everywhere apparent in the novel: in the picture of the black swan stretching its wings and hissing for the stale crust that Rosalie withholds, in the decaying ancient castle mouldering with damp where Rosalie declares her love for the young American, in the corpse of the small animal that Rosalie and Anna find during one of their walks.

In *Tonio Kröger* the leading character remarks that if an idea possesses you, you find it all about you, so that you can even smell it. *The Black Swan* creates its atmosphere of the charnel house in its sensuous effects. Beginning as the story of a sentimental matron absorbed in her deep love for nature, the novel is one in which the atmosphere surrounding the characters grows almost suffocating as the situation unfolds; and what seems at first a light, playfully humorous parody of the eighteenth century sentimental style becomes grotesque, almost diabolical, when we realize the contrast between the story that is being told and the manner of its telling. The book becomes a caricature, a brutal exposure of modern attitudes and failings. Perhaps Mann's intention was better illustrated in the original German title of the book—*Die Betrogene*—*The Deceived*. For the novel is a study of deception and self-deception, of betrayal and death.

In spite of its disturbing and sometimes repellent details and somberness of vision, *The Black Swan* is a miniature work of art. Thomas Mann wrote it at an age when most writers are content with the place they have won by their performances in the past. Yet here the hand of a master is still apparent. Though the novel has been written in a diminished tone, it probes deeply into areas of the strange and the perverse for its reflection of an age divided between the opposing forces of nature and the spirit.

THE BOOK OF THE COURTIER

Type of work: A treatise on manners

Author: Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529)

First published: 1528

Principal personages:

LADY ELISABETTA GONZAGA, Duchess of Urbino

LADY EMILIA PIA, her witty friend and attendant

COUNT LEWIS (LUDOVICO) OF CANOSSA,

SIR FREDERICK (FEDERICO) FREGOSO,

LORD OCTAVIAN FREGOSO,

LORD JULIAN (GIULIANO) DE MEDICIS,

M. BERNARD BIBIENA,

LORD GASPAR PALLAVICIN, and

PIETRO BEMBO, Italian noblemen, courtiers to the Duke of Urbino

FRANCESCO MARIA DELLA ROVERE, heir to the Duke of Urbino

Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* was one of the most widely read books in sixteenth century Europe. Noblemen and poets looked upon it as a portrait of the ideal man of the Renaissance, and such men as Sir Philip Sidney are said to have modeled themselves on Castiglione's imaginary courtier.

The book, the account of several evening's conversation at the court of Guidobaldo di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, is a fascinating record of the life there. In the first part, after an introduction and some scene setting, the Duchess, Elisabetta Gonzaga, asks the gentlemen of the court to choose a topic of conversation for the evening's entertainment. They settle on "what belongeth to the perfection of Courtiership," and Lewis, Count of Canossa, begins the discussion.

His ideal courtier must be, he says, nobly born, with a pleasant disposition, wit, and "a comely shape of person and countenance." Since his chief profession is to be a soldier, he must have training in all the skills that will make him an able warrior for his prince: riding, handling weapons of all sorts, wrestling, swimming, and other sports that increase strength and agility. The courtier also needs certain social talents, easy conversation, wit, the ability to dance, and, above all, a certain "grace" that makes all his activities seem effortless and unconscious.

The conversation turns to language, a burning issue in the Renaissance when the vernaculars were struggling with Latin for supremacy. The Count recommends that the courtier avoid using antiquated or unfamiliar words and that he take his vocabulary from those familiar Italian words "that have some grace in pronunciation." Sir Frederick Fregoso argues that the Count depends too much on custom; the courtier should shun the "vices of speech," though they have been adopted by the multitude. The Count concludes the argument by stating that it is the courtier's knowledge, rather than his diction, that is ultimately important. The first evening's conversation ends with a brief consideration of the importance of a courtier's having some skills in music and art.

On the second night Sir Frederick Fregoso is instructed to discuss the proper times and places for the courtier to exercise those virtues that have been declared essential for him. He points out that most of all an ideal gentleman needs discretion to determine when to speak, when to be silent, how to act so as to win praise and avoid envy. Fregoso recommends "little speaking, much doing, and not praising a man's own self in commendable deeds." He cites as a bad example an uncouth courtier who on one occasion entertained a lady with a description of his prowess with a two-handed sword and terrified

her with a demonstration of various strokes.

All courtiers are expected to be able to entertain ladies gracefully, and the ability to sing can be a particularly valuable accomplishment. Sir Frederick notes that a gentleman must have the wisdom to recognize that point in his life when his age makes it ludicrous for him to perform in public; if he must sing, let him do it privately.

This point leads to a general consideration of the proper demeanor for the young and the old. Fregoso praises mildness, deference, and hesitancy on the part of the fledgling courtier, but he suggests that the more restrained older man strive for a little liveliness. A golden mean is the ideal.

After a serious discussion of the value of friendship with loyal, honorable men, Sir Frederick turns, at the request of the cynical Lord Gaspar Pallavicini to a consideration of court entertainments. In this area, too, Fregoso pleads for moderation; too great a concern with dice or cards can become a vice, and a man may waste the better part of his days in becoming a brilliant chess player. The best entertainment comes from a courtier's wit, as Castiglione shows by weaving into his narrative a number of anecdotes and "merry pranks." M. Bernard Bibiena, who tells many of the witty tales, cautions the company to be mindful of the time, the place, and the individuals in jesting; maliciousness and cruelty should have no part in court life.

At the end of the second part the conversation turns to the character of women, whose honor and trustworthiness are wittily attacked by Lord Gaspar and defended by the Lady Emilia; this sparing couple has been considered Shakespeare's inspiration for Beatrice and Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Lord Julian de Medicis is instructed to fashion an ideal court lady for the next evening's amusement.

The position of women is eloquently defended in Part III; one of the gentle-

men asserts that "no court, how great soever it be, can have any sightliness or brightness in it, or mirth without women, nor any Courtier can be gracious, pleasant or hardy, nor at any time undertake any gallant enterprise of Chivalry, unless he be stirred with the conversation and with the love and contentation of women."

Lord Julian wants for his ideal woman sweetness, tenderness, and womanliness, a pleasing disposition, noble birth, and a certain amount of beauty; she needs the same virtues of courage, loyalty, and discretion that the courtier requires, and her position, too, may be enhanced by pleasant conversation and modesty. She should avoid that common feminine failing, a fondness for gossiping about other women. The ladies, as well as the gentlemen, of the court need some skill in the arts, so that they may dance, sing, or play musical instruments with ease. Lord Julian would have the court lady at least acquainted with literature and philosophy.

Lord Gaspar, who has injected anti-feminist sentiments throughout Lord Julian's discourse, scoffs at the notion of educated women and proclaims that the sex is an imperfection in nature. Lord Julian counters by enumerating those qualities in which he finds women superior to men and by relating the stories of famous women in history.

Sir Frederick asks Lord Julian to consider what he feels most important for women: "what belongeth to the communication of love." The latter answers that a lady must first distinguish between true and false protestations of affection. A good Christian, he can approve only of love which can lead to marriage. To the objection that an aged, unattractive, or unfaithful husband might justify favors to a lover, Lord Julian replies: "If this mishap chance to the woman of the palace, that the hatred of her husband or the love of another bendeth her to love, I will have her to grant her lover nothing else but the mind; not at any time to make

him any certain token of love, neither in word nor gesture, nor any other way that he may be fully assured of it."

The fourth part opens with a brief reflection on mortality, as Castiglione relates the fates of members of the court of Urbino during the years between the nights he is describing and the time he completed his book. He turns then to the topic of the final evening's discussion, the courtier's role as adviser to his prince. Lord Octavian Fregoso points out that this role is often made difficult by the arrogance and pride of rulers, who consider that their power automatically confers wisdom. The courtier must lead his prince gently and subtly toward goodness, courage, justice, and temperance, mingling moral instruction with pleasure, one justification for his acquiring skills in the "polite arts." Lord Gaspar questions Fregoso's basic premise, that virtue can be taught, but the latter affirms his conviction that if moral virtues were innate, man would never become evil. Morality is acquired, rather than inborn, and education is therefore of inestimable value.

The discussion shifts to government itself, and arguments about the relative value of the kingdom and of the commonwealth are weighed. The group concludes that the rule of the virtuous prince, a man attuned to both the active and the contemplative life, is best. Lord Octavian

suggests that a council of the nobility and a lower advisory house chosen from the citizens of the land might increase the virtue and knowledge of the prince; such a government would combine the best aspects of monarchy, aristocracy, and the commonwealth.

The Book of the Courtier concludes with a famous and highly influential passage, Pietro Bembo's discourse on Platonic love. The passions of youth are unfitting for the older courtier; he must recognize that all love is, in fact, a yearning for beauty, and he must raise his thoughts from admiration of a single lovely woman to contemplate the idea of beauty. Purified of his human faults by this contemplation he can reach "the high mansion place where the heavenly, amiable and right beauty dwelleth, which lieth hidden in the innermost secrets of God." Bembo's discourse becomes more and more enraptured, and when he breaks off at last the others realize that it is daybreak. The book ends as the courtiers and ladies disperse for the last time.

There is, perhaps, no finer or more appealing picture of life in the Italian Renaissance than that in *The Book of the Courtier*. Castiglione had a brilliant dramatic gift that enabled him to bring to life his friends at Urbino and to express their ideals clearly and powerfully in his natural, rapidly moving dialogue.

THE BOROUGH: A POEM IN TWENTY-FOUR LETTERS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: George Crabbe (1754-1832)

Locale: An English seaport

First published: 1810

Principal characters:

PETER GRIMES, a fisherman

ELLEN ORFORD, a pauper

SWALLOW, a grasping lawyer

BLANEY, an inhabitant of the Alms-House

THE MAYOR OF THE BOROUGH

THE VICAR OF THE PARISH

A BURGESS, who writes the Letters

George Crabbe was a writer of provincial background who had made good in

the capital by using his provincial material. His initial success in London with

The Library, published in 1781, made it possible for the son of a fisherman and petty customs officer to enter the Church in 1782 and be given a respectable living as an Anglican clergyman. He gave up poetry after *The Newspaper*, in 1785, and did not resume writing until he began publishing again in the 1807 *Poems*. In the decades between his two periods of composition much had changed in English poetry, and Crabbe's continuation of his original style and matter makes it difficult to place him in the Romantic Period.

He was really the last and best representative of the host of adventuring, provincial poetasters who flocked to London to make their fortunes in the eighteenth century—Chatterton, Goldsmith, Mallet, Samuel Johnson, to name but a few. This is to repeat a truism in Crabbe criticism—that Aldeburgh, where he was born, is all his material—but it also places Crabbe in literary history and shows his strength, and perhaps accounts for his durability; the most obvious manifestation of that would be the present Aldeburgh Festival and Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*, derived from Letter 22 of *The Borough*.

The Village, published in 1783, and *The Borough* contain and are contained by a seaside community in which the folk are at the mercy of the elements, their only salvation against bad times being native prudence. In their world no help comes from the outside, only temptation and danger. Despite his absence from Aldeburgh after the age of twenty-six, Crabbe was unable to forget youthful privation and misery by adopting a tourist's attitude to provincial society and nature, an increasingly common mid-Victorian attitude of which Balmoral is the symbol. Few of his heroes and heroines have private incomes, and if caught in a storm at sea they are more likely to perish than to find themselves washed up on the sand.

Crabbe's realism was reinforced by par-

ish duties; it is not the pessimism of which his mid-Victorian and Romantic critics accused him. Today we appreciate the salt in his stories more than the sugar in the work of other poets writing at the same time as Crabbe but equipped with a less immediate experience of people and place. His second importance in the history of English poetry is the fact that he casts a shadow beside the major figures of his second period and prepares the narrative form in English poetry for the genre work of Tennyson's *Idyls of the Heath*, Browning's *Men and Women*, and Hardy's local-color sketches in verse. In the early years of the nineteenth century Crabbe's work was paralleled in prose by Maria Edgeworth's *Irish Castle Rackrent* and John Galt's Scottish *Annals of The Parish*, rather than the country novels of Jane Austen. All the foregoing is summed up in Crabbe's best known line from *The Village*—"I paint the Cot, As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not"—and illustrated in *The Borough*, the most unified of his works.

To "paint the Cot" Crabbe used the pentameter couplet, a meter noted for its wit and music and not for the narrative use to which Crabbe put it; that *The Borough* is made up of twenty-four letters or "epistles" to some extent restricts the narrative and encourages general observation, conventional in the eighteenth century verse epistle. In place of wit and music Crabbe relied on rugged and compact language which reflects that of his characters, especially the bourgeois who is supposed to be writing the letters. The most tiring feature of the succession of couplets is the regular placing of the caesura, which makes too obvious the antithesis and balance which supports the lines:

Then he began to reason and to feel
He could not dig nor had he learn'd to steal;
And should he beg as long as he might live,
He justly fear'd that nobody would give:

Crabbe arranged the letters in a certain order, preceded each with a curt prose Argument, added a long Preface, and subscribed a brief Envoi. After the "General Description" of Letter I Crabbe arranges his aspects in the proper order, beginning with the most important person in the Borough and its center the Vicar and his church, but concluding with the schools. His arrangement falls into two major divisions, the provident and the improvident, of the adult world, with the children bringing up the rear. The provident come under three headings or activities in order of importance: religion, work, and play; the improvident are divided into those in the almhouse and hospital and the poor outside parish relief, with a final letter on those in prisons. Seven of these letters narrate the miserable histories of those in or out of the almshouse. Within each of the three sections of the first division Crabbe also observes a declining order of importance: after the church and the Vicar have been described, Crabbe turns to the "Sects and Professions of Religion" which he defends at length in his preface as a strong but essentially true picture of the "Calvinistic" and "Armenian" Methodists who so disturbed the parson and his church, as Crabbe knew from bitter experience. The professions of law and physic are followed by the "Trades." The third section begins with "Amusements," followed in descending order by "Clubs and Social Meetings," "Inns," and "Players," which last leads straight down the path of destruction to the whole division on the improvident. The strength of this latter division is the seven narratives, but many readers will prefer for the extraordinarily vivid scenes briefly sketched in the letters of the first division, especially those in "Elections" and that on the "Players," which include brief vivid portraits, such as that of the lawyer, Swallow, who lives up to his name.

Crabbe's Preface, like his Arguments, outlines what is to come in each letter

but also deals with the work as a whole. The whole scheme of *The Borough* is that Crabbe has apparently written to "an ideal friend," a burgess in an unnamed large seaport, asking him to describe his borough, and the letters sometimes begin with a brief question which the correspondent answers. Crabbe then admits that the resulting picture of the Borough is uneven but the envoi provides the answer:

Man's vice and crime I combat as I
can, . . .
(The giant-Folly, the enchanter-Vice)
. . . I point the powers of rhyme,
And, sparing criminals, attack the crime.

Here the country parson drops his mask and admits that he is preaching one of his regular sermons to encourage industry and thrift and avoid the enticements of riches and city life. Most of the Preface, including the long passage on the Methodists, is taken up with apologizing for the satire of religions, professions, and amusements in the first division and for the repetitious falls from fortune in the second. An exception is Letter XX, "Ellen Orford," which ends in resigned piety. Crabbe's justification is that of "fidelity," that he did know such a person or instance, as when in Letter V he cites a rich fisherman who had never heard, until a friend told him, of the practice of lending money at interest, with this result:

Though blind so long to interest, all
allow
That no man better understands it
now: . . .
Stepping from post to post, he reach'd
the chair,
And there he now reposes—that's the
mayor.

Crabbe is the bard who will paint his Borough "as Truth will paint it," and in the envoi to Letter 24 he looks forward to his readers' reaction:

"This is a likeness," may they all declare,

"And I have seen him but I know not where. . . ."

It is sometimes difficult to see the "likeness" in the seven narratives of the poor and the almshouse because they all seem to decline with celerity into remorse and destitution, but it may be that time has removed such objects from what must have been Crabbe's daily observation both as a boy in Aldeburgh and as a country parson. Certainly the most surprising decline is that of Peter Grimes, which is at the same time the most convincing, partly because in this account Crabbe uses nature to much greater effect

than in the other narratives. More than nature, society is his object, and especially the quirks of character and turns of fate in family histories well known to those who stay long in any place. If Crabbe seems to relish the misery and vice exhibited in the citizens of his borough, he is adopting what is often the provincial's revenge against his native town: a scarifying of its mean soul and low manners in gripping detail. This is not the whole effect of *The Borough*, but what there is marks it as a forerunner of the supremely provincial novel, James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

THE BOSTONIANS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry James (1843-1916)

Time: The early 1870's

Locale: Boston, Massachusetts; New York City

First published: 1886

Principal characters:

OLIVE CHANCELLOR, a Back Bay woman of modest means

MRS. ADELINE LUNA, her sister

BASIL RANDOM, her cousin from Mississippi, who marries Verena Tarrant

VERENA TARRANT, Olive's protégée, a platform prodigy

"DOCTOR" SELAH TARRANT, a mesmeric healer, Verena's father

MRS. TARRANT, the daughter of Boston Abolitionists, Verena's mother

MISS BIRDSEYE, a veteran of New England reform movements

DR. PRANCE, a woman doctor attending Miss Birdseye

MRS. FARRINDER, a campaigner for women's rights

MRS. BURRAGE, a New York society hostess

HENRY BURRAGE, her son, a Harvard undergraduate who courts Verena

The Bostonians is the longest of James's novels in an American setting, and in spite of his later dissatisfaction with its middle section or the high promise given to the unfinished *The Ivory Tower*, it is his most important fictive statement on America. The name and setting of the novel are significant; two other American novels, *Washington Square* and *The Europeans*, are set in New York City and Boston respectively; *The Bostonians* begins in Charles Street and ends in the Music Hall in Boston, but its second half begins in New York,

which James always claimed as his native city. James had difficulty selecting the title but when he had settled on *The Bostonians* he knew it was an exact description of the contents and of his meaning.

The best commentary on the work is found in James's preface to the New York Edition; its significance in James's American canon is discussed by F. O. Matthiessen in his introduction to *The American Novels and Stories of Henry James*. James had several times tried to clarify his famous passage, in his life of

Hawthorne, on what America offered and lacked in respect to the novelist. By his experience James himself was limited as an American novelist, and *The Bostonians* was his attempt to write on a subject that was at once local and typical, a local manifestation of a national trait. James naturally chose that distinguishing feature of American life, the American woman, whose novelty he had presented in Isabel Archer and other heroines. The locality was the Boston he knew of in the early 1870's and the New York he lovingly introduces in the novel. For his purpose, more important than the locale of Boston was its atmosphere of exhausted triumph after abolition and the hectic pursuit of new reform movements, especially that of women's rights. James's general distaste for the reformers if not for their proposals may be sensed in his portraits in the novel.

The "Bostonians" may be variously identified as one, two, or more characters, but the term, used only once, refers to Olive Chancellor and Verena Tarrant. Although James referred to Verena as the "heroine," the true "Bostonian" is Olive, the embodiment of the clash between discrimination and indiscriminating action in Boston of the 1870's. Destined by nature and appearance to be a "New England Nun," she becomes in the very last paragraph of the novel a Boston battler, haranguing a capacity crowd in Boston's largest auditorium in place of Verena, who has in the nick of time been carried away by Basil Ransom to meet her proper destiny as his wife. These three play out an ironic and psychologically penetrating form of the eternal triangle.

James seems to approve Verena's fate, largely because she is unawakened throughout almost the whole novel; she remains a pretty young girl with no mind and of little interest to James. Basil Ransom is a Mississippian trying to revive the family plantation by practicing law in New York; he does not have ideas (until he begins to write reactionary articles)

but lives by a code: everyone must do his or her work well in one's appointed station in life. When he tries to express this idea to Verena as they sit in Central Park, she is horrified and fascinated because there is no "Progress" in his code. But in the end Basil and Verena pair off as a fairly normal couple. What Mississippi was to make of Verena would have made a superb sequel to this work, but James did not know the South, and treats it simply as the last reservoir of acceptable masculinity from which he plucks his necessary hero.

Olive Chancellor was much more in James's acquaintance. With no other family ties except those to her sister, Mrs. Luna, comfortably settled in Charles Street, she had time, intelligence, taste, and money which she diffused quietly through twenty committees and reform groups. She is the very portrait of a Boston lady; her tragic flaw is to allow her desire for real action to overrule her taste: she falls in love with Verena's sweet stream of humbug as Basil falls in love with Verena's voice. This is not wholly Olive's fault, as is shown by the gallery of Bostonians introduced at the suffragette party in Miss Birdseye's tasteless apartment at the beginning of the novel. The two male Bostonians are a hack journalist and "Doctor" Selah Tarrant, a mesmeric healer and a fake not only to Basil's eyes but also to those of Dr. Prance, a woman doctor who is really active in her role of "new woman" and who has little time for talking about the subject. As the real and fake doctors are contrasted, so is Dr. Prance contrasted with the suffragette campaigner, Mrs. Farrinder, who is not a Bostonian and who is also suspicious of Tarrant and his Verena's "inspirational" views. Mrs. Farrinder's weak husband shows what men will amount to and what Basil fights against in the new regime, and Mrs. Farrinder herself, in thinking that talk will achieve the revolution Dr. Prance quietly demonstrates, shows what Olive could and possibly does degenerate into.

Also ranged about Olive in contrasting positions are the other three Bostonians. Mrs. Luna is completely worldly and contemptuous of any womanly activity but that of the salon. Equally worldly but totally vulgar is Verena's mother, who urges her daughter to accept Olive's impulsive invitation to visit Boston. Verena's visit ends in her staying with Olive and becoming the latter's protégée instead of "Doctor" Tarrant's prodigy: Olive pays the Tarrants to keep away from Verena.

The last and best of the Bostonians is Miss Birdseye, James's favorite creation in the novel. At the age of eighty she is still a compulsive reformer in a completely selfless and ineffectual manner which contrasts with the practical Dr. Prance and Mrs. Farrinder, and with the worldly creatures of Boston and New York. She appears only three times in the novel: at the initial party which introduces most of the characters; when she plays the part of destiny in giving Ransom Verena's Cambridge address, under the impression he is interested in the movement for women's rights; and at Olive's summer cottage, at Marmion, where she dies happily, mistakenly believing that Verena has enlisted Ransom in the cause. She stands for Boston's true nature, which Olive ignores in trying to achieve a triumph through Verena.

In the second part of the novel Olive compounds her failure of discrimination by accepting the invitation of Mrs. Burrage, a New York society hostess, to show off Verena in New York; Olive thinks she has triumphed in securing Verena's promise not to marry and in diverting young Henry Burrage's attentions from Verena. Olive thus overreaches herself at the same moment and in the same way as Verena: Olive's initial mistake was to invite Ransom to Boston; Verena invites him to the Burrage evening party, partly as a result of his seeking her out in Cambridge. She thinks she is working for the

cause, but she is shown as very slowly awakening to her love for Ransom, which precipitates the catastrophe.

Verena is the fulcrum of the plot, and her affection first for Olive, then for Ransom, is reflected in the structure of the novel. The first twenty chapters contain four scenes: Olive's dinner with Basil, Miss Birdseye's party that night, Basil's call on Olive and Verena the next morning, and some months later a tea party at the Tarrants for Olive and, as it turns out, Henry Burrage. This first half concentrates on Olive's developing affection for Verena. But Verena is incapable of decision or action and in the second half of the novel, as Basil Ransom takes the center of the stage, she gradually falls under his influence. Four principal settings are employed: Cambridge, where Ransom visits Verena; New York, the scene of Mrs. Burrage's party and the discussion between Verena and Basil in Central Park; Marmion, where Olive's cottage is the scene of Miss Birdseye's death and Olive's looming defeat in the suit Basil Ransom presses on Verena; and Boston, where in the anteroom of the Music Hall on the evening of Verena's first public appearance Basil finally defeats Olive and carries off Verena as most of the remaining cast make a final appearance—the Tarrants, the Burrages, the Farrinders.

Throughout the novel the characteristic devices of James's late middle style are apparent: lengthening paragraphs, alternating direct and indirect colloquy, the use of idiomatic terms to carry nuances of meaning. More obvious, especially in the dramatic close, is the growing dependence on set scenes to show the stages of the drama. Over all these is the play of James's irony and pity directed at the latter-day Bostonian, Olive Chancellor, the local representation of a national type and the heroine of this distinctly American tragedy.

BOSWELL'S LONDON JOURNAL: 1762-1763

Type of work: Diary

Author: James Boswell (1740-1795)

First published: 1950

Principal personages:

JAMES BOSWELL, the author, a young Scotsman

SAMUEL JOHNSON, the great critic, lexicographer, essayist, and poet

WILLIAM TEMPLE, Boswell's friend, a sensible young law student

LORD EGLINTON, a wealthy young nobleman, another of Boswell's friends.

THE HON. ANDREW ERSKINE, a Scotsman who befriended Boswell in London

LADY ANNE ERSKINE, his sister

James Boswell left his family at home near Edinburgh in the autumn of 1762 to spend the winter in London, where he hoped to obtain a commission in the Guards. He was convinced that the military life, which would allow him to live in the city he loved so much, would suit him far better than the legal profession chosen for him by his father, a noted Scottish jurist. He recorded the activities, the hopes, and the disappointments of this year in London in a diary, which he sent in regular installments to a young friend who remained in Scotland. This journal, which miraculously survived for two hundred years and came to light in the twentieth century, is a remarkably revealing document, for reticence was not one of Boswell's marked characteristics; the frankness of his account of his activities brings him vividly to life.

Boswell was just twenty-two when he traveled south into England. He had passed his legal examinations, and his father had at last grudgingly agreed to give his son an allowance to allow him to pursue the career he thought he wanted. Lord Auchinleck's decision proved to be a wise one, for, after months of discouragement, Boswell finally realized that he was not going to obtain the desired commission, even with the help of noble friends, and he agreed to take up law again, on the condition that he might travel on the Continent before he returned to Scotland to begin his practice.

However frustrating these experiences

proved to Boswell, they provide fascinating reading in the *London Journal*. The author's youth is evident in many of the actions and impressions he records. He went to the city to turn himself into a polished English gentleman, and the pages of his diary are filled with resolutions for the improvement of his character and manners. At times this desire for sophistication manifests itself as a rather unattractive snobbery. Boswell records his disgust at the familiarity with which some of his Scottish friends treated him, at the provincialism of their conversation, and at the lack of restraint in their manners. In these moods he overlooked the fact that these hospitable people, especially Captain Andrew Erskine and his sister, had done much to alleviate his loneliness.

However, Boswell is for the most part perceptive about his relationships. He knows that William Temple, an old comrade from university days, a reserved and studious young man, is a good influence on him and that Lord Eglinton, who had introduced him to various dissipations during his first trip to London in 1760, encourages those vices for which his inclination is already too strong. Toward the end of the journal Boswell comments that Temple and Johnston, the Scottish friend to whom he was sending the diary, were those in whom he could confide his deepest feelings, while he feared to expose his sentiments to Erskine and Eglinton, though he valued their company for

amusement. Boswell did, on occasion, lay himself open to their scorn with his supersensitive view of his own dignity; he violently resented criticism of his writing, and he sent indignant letters to Lord Eglington when he felt that he had not been treated with the civility to which he felt he was entitled. This overblown sense of his own importance was perhaps the hardest of Boswell's faults for him to recognize. It never occurred to him even to doubt that courtiers, ladies, and distinguished literary figures would consider themselves privileged to make his acquaintance.

Boswell is, however, acutely aware of many of his other shortcomings; his daily memoranda constantly remind him to correct them. However, his resolutions were notoriously short-lived. A vow of increased economy was sure to be followed by some extravagance, generally charitable, but nonetheless prodigal; intense remorse over his profligate relations with women generally preceded new debauchery; and promised rejection of his more frivolous acquaintances often led only to renewed amity. His later works show him still at his youthful routine, repenting and renewing his wrongdoing with equal fervor.

He was often the victim of his essentially trusting nature, especially in his relations with women, as the first entries of his diary show in the account of his affair with Louisa, an actress. Anxious to see himself as a romantic hero, he trusted her protestations of affection, fidelity, and morality, lent her money, pursued his conquest, and as a reward spent five weeks in his rooms convalescing from the disease with which she infected him.

For all Boswell's bravado and his apparent self-assurance, he suffered at times from a deep sense of melancholy and inferiority, probably the lingering result of a nervous disorder that had struck him when he was in his late teens. He had a childish fear of ghosts, and in his darker fits, when he could not bear to sleep alone in his lodgings, he would seek ref-

uge for the night with one of his friends. This melancholy strain in his personality may have been one of the things that drew Boswell close to the great lexicographer, critic, and essayist, Samuel Johnson, whom he met for the first time during the winter of the *London Journal*. Johnson was himself subject to inexplicable terrors, and throughout his life he showed great compassion for this type of human weakness.

It is sometimes difficult to understand just what drew Boswell and Johnson together, but the account of their early acquaintance shows the appealing quality of Boswell's naïveté, however brash it might be at times, the hero-worship he felt for Johnson, his anxiety to please, and his eagerness for the older man's counsel. Johnson's attitude toward Boswell, as scholars have pointed out, is in many respects paternal. He responded warmly to both the adulation and the appeals for help, and he seems to have found Boswell's enthusiasms refreshing. His insistence on accompanying his young friend to Harwich to see him sail for his studies in the Netherlands provides touching testimony of the older man's affection.

Boswell's friendship with Johnson changed the character of the *London Journal* to a degree. From the time of their meeting, Boswell recorded increasingly more about Johnson's opinions on life and literature and less about his own feelings, though the latter were never ignored. Inevitably, his widening interests tended to decrease his introspection.

The *London Journal* is not simply jottings of the day's activities, but a conscious literary effort. Boswell seems to have composed the account of several days at a time, basing the diary on sketchy memoranda, and this practice allowed him to build some dramatic suspense. His ability to capture the conversations of his day, the remarks of London citizens at Child's coffee house, or the discussions of Johnson and his circle, shows the gift for narration that makes the *Life*

of *Johnson* a masterpiece. Spurred on by Johnson's praise of the practice of keeping a journal, Boswell strove with great diligence to improve the literary quality

of the latter portions of his work. As a result the book presents a remarkably lively and accurate picture of life in Boswell's time.

THE BRIDGE ON THE DRINA

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ivo Andrić (1892-)

Time: 1516-1914

Locale: Višegrad, Bosnia

First published: 1945

Principal characters:

MEHMED PASHA SOKOLOVICI, the Turkish Grand Vezir who commanded that the bridge be built

ABIDGA, the first overseer of construction

ARIF BEG, the second overseer

TOSUN EFFENDI, the head stonemason

RADISAV, a peasant laborer who revolted

SALKO CORKAN, an illegitimate child, son of the town

FATA OSMANAGIĆ, a beautiful woman, most famed suicide from the bridge

NAIL HAMZIĆ, to whom Fata was betrothed

ALIHODJA MUTEVELIĆ, whose family represented the Turkish pasha for two hundred years

OSMAN EFFENDI KARAMANLI, who opposed peaceful capitulation to the Austrians

MILAN GLAŠICANIN, town gambler cured of gambling by a stranger on the bridge

NIKOLA GLAŠICANIN, a socialist student

GREGOR FEDUN, a guard of the Austrian *streifkorps*

POP NIKOLA, a Catholic priest

LOTTE ZÄHLER, a masculine woman who ran the hotel

SANTO PAPO, a Jewish moneylender

In 1961, Ivo Andrić, a Yugoslavian writer, was awarded the Nobel Prize for "the epic force with which he has depicted themes and human destinies drawn from the history of his country." The award was primarily for his novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, published in 1945 as part of his Bosnian trilogy.

The Bridge on the Drina is a fusion and expansion of many of the themes that have preoccupied Andrić since 1920. In a series of short stories written between 1920 and 1931, Andrić had portrayed the life of the Bosnian people, both as a collective unity and as separate and very different individuals. In *The Bridge on the Drina* the life of the people of Višegrad is depicted

through the events of centuries, and the description of countless characters and their reactions to life takes the place of plot. The Drina is the river which marks the boundary between Bosnia and Serbia. Spanning it at Višegrad, the Turks built a bridge in the sixteenth century, and the novel describes life as it moves around and over the bridge during the course of three and one-half centuries, up to the time of World War I.

The bridge itself has been much discussed as the central symbol of the novel. As a historical symbol the bridge united Serbia to the east and Bosnia to the west, and was originally built to make travel easier. But this function was lost when a railroad was built from

Višegrad to Sarajevo. Another possible interpretation is Biblical. Andrić refers to the bridge as a suprahuman existence; it endures and unites all of the inhabitants of Višegrad through time. In the sixteenth century mothers scream when their sons are taken to Stambul as a blood tribute to the Vezir, and almost four centuries later they shout and plead again when their sons are forcibly recruited for the Austrian Army. The bridge serves as a Calvary; for in the course of the novel a peasant, a religious pilgrim, a young mill attendant, and a parish priest—all innocent of any real crime—are impaled on the *kapia*, the wide terraces on either side of the middle of the bridge.

Yet if the bridge is the scene of human sacrifice, it is also the place of spiritual purification. Milan Glašćanin is cured of his desire for gambling when a mysterious stranger gambles with him in the *kapia* of the bridge and forces Milan to pledge that if he loses he will leap into the Drina. Milan does lose, but the stranger disappears and in his stead Milan sees only the value of life. Cor-kan, a drunkard, is forced by his taunting companions to walk on the icy bridge. Suddenly an unknown power fills him, and he dances to an unheard music which gives him serenity and balance. The bridge has almost magical powers, and the idea of the bridge as something more than it appears to be is exploited by the author's use of legend in the novel. Andrić had also used Bosnian folklore and legends in many of his earlier works, and in his short story titled "The Journey to Alije Djerdjeleza," published in 1920, he had told the tale of a traditional Moslem hero. In his fiction, however, the popular material is highly modified and serves only as the starting point for an elaborate tale.

At the beginning of *The Bridge on the Drina*, Andrić retells the legend of the bridge that demands human sacrifice before it can be completed, and then he modifies the story by combining it with

the tale of a peasant, Radisav. During the building of the bridge the men of Višegrad were forced to work without pay, and they resented both the work and the Turkish overseers. Some of the local men began to sabotage the work at night. Radisav was captured and executed by being impaled in front of the populace. The old legend thus acquires new significance. Andrić was also interested in intense emotions and the delicate line between sanity and madness. The "Man from Plevlje" is a good example; captain of the guard, he realizes that he would have been executed if Radisav had not been chosen. This thought haunts him until he loses all control of himself and eventually goes mad.

"Eastern" or Moslem thought also plays a part in the novel. The Moslem view of the symbolic meaning of the bridge is expressed by several characters in the novel, especially by Alihodja. The bridge stands for man's creative work which achieves something lasting and good. At the end of the book Alihodja says that in this world anything can happen, except that wise and great men who would build bridges for the love of God and the beauty of the world should never vanish. If they did, indeed, vanish, that would mean the love of God no longer existed, and such cannot be. Andrić had used the bridge symbol with this same meaning in his 1931 short story, "The Bridge on the Dzdeka."

The first section of *The Bridge on the Drina* begins with the birth of Mehmed Pasha Sokolli, the Grand Vezir, and ends with an account of his senseless murder by a religious fanatic. In this account, as in many of his stories, Andrić portrays death as blind and unjust. In the second half of the eighteenth century the bridge survived a great flood, and in the house of one of the Moslem leaders, Turks, Christians, and Jews were forced to live together like castaways in the flood of time. The theme of unity in the face of adversity among the different ethnic populations of Višegrad reappears during

the Serbian revolt against Turkish domination. The Turks pray for the destruction of the Serbs and the Serbs pray to destroy the Turks. In 1878, when the Austrian troops entered the town, the people were suspicious of one another. But soon representatives of Turks, Jews, and Christians begin to gather on the bridge to await the arrival of the Austrian commandant. The bridge for a while unites them and reveals a greater force than their ethnic differences. Nevertheless, through the centuries there is more conflict than harmony; thus the bridge becomes an idealistic symbol of what could be.

The second part of the novel concerns the Austro-Hungarian domination of the region and the course of World War I. Two characters especially symbolize the fate of the bridge. Alihodja, a conservative Moslem, is killed in the bombardment of the bridge in 1914. Lotte loses her shop and wanders senselessly about the town. Both characters have been dis-

placed by the cruel force of circumstance. Similarly, the bridge itself loses its reason for being with the advent of the railroad, and when the Balkan wars alter the boundary of Serbia and Bosnia the bridge is no longer the meeting place of East and West. In 1914 one of the eleven arches of the bridge is damaged. Andrić expresses the hope that men will not have to live through ten more broken arches.

If *The Bridge on the Drina* has a fault, it is that the relationship between the characters is too loose. It is less of a story than a grand panorama combining legend, folklore, and political history. Andrić has expressed in his work a sympathy for idealism. Perhaps it is not yet an anachronism today to value man's endeavors and to view his failures as tragedy. For Andrić does not share the existential point of view. He sees the history of a people as a valuable human document, and he views man's mistakes and crimes as deep tragedy.

BRIEF LIVES

Type of work: Biographies
Author: John Aubrey (1625-1697)
First published: 1813

John Aubrey was interested in the biographical rather than the historical elements of great events. He found out all he could about the people of his time; some of it is gossip, some of it actual historical fact. At Oxford he came under the influence of antiquaries, and he began to do research on biography of a more sophisticated and indeed scientific kind than had previously been practiced. He worked from local records, birth and death registers, letters, legal documents, and even from tombstones in order to acquire information for his great series of *Brief Lives*. He evaluated this material as well as he could and wrote frequently of the need to possess accurate information of the past lest it become simply a myth. For his scientific spirit of inquiry he was

honored by the Royal Society, becoming one of the original founding members.

The people described in the *Brief Lives*, first published as *Lives of Eminent Men* in 1813, are the great men and women of the seventeenth century. There is very little in this biographical work that reflects on those who are not notable, who have not, by birth or accomplishment, become the leaders of their time, among them John Florio, George Herbert, John Milton, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Sir Walter Raleigh. Aubrey's method of dealing with his subjects is both factual and interpretative. In his life of Milton he begins, for example, with a short account of the verifiable facts of the poet's birth and ancestry. Next he presents an account of

the subject's family. Aubrey then devotes sections to education, travel, and accomplishments. The latter are treated with much care, and his account of things done and written is an important repository for our own historical inquiries. Aubrey is particular to add other information about the men and women in his work; of great interest is his recounting of their appearance and taste. He frequently concludes his biographical sketch with a brief evaluation of the work or character of the subject.

One of the great constants of *Brief Lives* is its emphasis on what may be called the human element. Aubrey, like most men of his age, was fascinated not so much by facts of a statistical kind as he was by the human personality itself. In this respect his book is a landmark of interpretative biography. For example, we find that John Milton had an "ingenious Soul" in "a beautifull and well proportioned body." Aubrey then remarks that he and Milton were approximately of the same size and build. The comparison is not intended to be invidious; Aubrey is simply interested in the most obvious and actual things about the subject. He adds other information that would seem superfluous if it did not reveal matter of interest both about the subject and the man describing him, pointing out that Milton was generally a healthy man, and that he seldom "tooke any physique."

Aubrey is able to write about things that a historian would give a great deal to have witnessed. When he writes about General Monk, the man responsible for the restoration of Charles II, he goes to his own memory of the events of 1660 and describes his personal impressions of the event. He mentions not only the day but the very hour, noting that Monk arrived in London at mid-day and went shortly thereafter directly to the House of Parliament. Aubrey adds that Monk refused, in modesty, to sit down while in the house, that he went to dinner with certain of the members, and that he was instrumental in causing the Parliament to

vote for the return of Charles Stuart. In the midst of these recollections, some trivial and some vital, Aubrey delivers himself of *obiter dicta*: his own opinion of certain members of Parliament and their actions.

Often the matter of the biography seems apocryphal. The life of Sir Thomas More repeats the ancient story of the encounter of More with a madman on the gate-house of his manor. More, who was then old and feeble, was surprised to find a lunatic approach him and tell him that he was going to be thrown over the battlements. More, supposedly, or so the biography (or legend) states, picked up a little dog that was with him and proposed that they first throw the dog over to see how it was done. After this he rid himself of the madman by sending him down to get the dog and try it again. It is matter like this which reveals, if not the actual nature of what happened, the idea of what *would* happen if a philosopher were to find himself in such a spot. The most famous of these fictional facts is of course in the life of William Shakespeare. Aubrey repeats the ancient tale of Shakespeare as a butcher's apprentice; whenever he killed a calf "he would doe it in a high style, and make a Speech." Aubrey adds many other items which have since become part of the Shakespeare legend: the good looks of the playwright; his wit; his acting ability. Yet there are many things which we know are facts, among them Ben Jonson's opinions of Shakespeare as a writer.

Probably the best known of the lives, and certainly the most detailed, is that of Thomas Hobbes. This life offers no such difficulties as that of More or Shakespeare, for Hobbes lived in the lifetime of his biographer, and the facts were more easily garnered. Aubrey has many valuable things to say about the writing habits of Hobbes; he remarks that he has often heard Hobbes himself say things that revealed his inner thoughts. We find that Hobbes tried many kinds of writing and indulged in a good deal of reading, but

that he was most taken with scientific and quasi-scientific affairs. There is the famous account of Hobbes and his frequent walks, having always in his pocket a notebook, and having in his hand a cane the head of which was a pen set in a bottle of ink. In this way Hobbes was able to capture every stray thought, "or else he should perhaps have lost it." Aubrey reveals that Hobbes' *Leviathan* was not written for personal advantage, as has often been suspected. At least Hobbes informed Aubrey himself that the spirit of inquiry alone sustained the volume. If this is true, Aubrey's information is invaluable; if false, it reveals the danger of consulting the man whose life is to be reconstructed. Biography is perhaps less liable to distortion than autobiography, but Aubrey's method does allow for exaggeration or misinformation, even while it permits far greater involvement of the subject and revelation of his motives.

Invaluable to historians is Aubrey's account of the relationships, public and private, of the figures in his studies. He reveals, for example, that the Earl of Danby was a model estate manager; that his mother was a superb politician and practical economist; that Danvers had advised the Earl of Essex to discuss his position with Queen Elizabeth but that he failed to do so, and consequently was executed for treason. We find that Robert Hooke, Curator of Experiments at the Royal Society, made his fortune by speculation after the fire that destroyed London in 1666 by being appointed one of the surveyors of the ruins. Perhaps most interesting in these biographies is Aubrey's account of the conditions at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. His work, although principally focused on the famous men who taught and did

research at those universities, offers a wealth of information on the student body, the curriculum, the fees and costs of education, even the amusements of the students. In short, although Aubrey is principally concerned with the events of individual lives, he has an enormous amount of peripheral information on the institutions of the day.

Characteristic of the work as a whole is Aubrey's wide interest in matters of geography, architecture, literature, and other Renaissance studies and arts. The biographies are full of quotations from the literature of the day, and Aubrey often alludes to the various fields of study to which his subjects applied themselves. Aubrey delivers himself of opinions on the nature of a well-run household, a good education, a pleasing poem, an attractive painting. He is never better than when he is bringing these opinions to bear on his subjects, for he enriches the facts of biography in a thoroughly characteristic Renaissance manner. His leisurely observation on such matters is, at least in part, responsible for our knowing exactly what it was that Milton read as a young man (Hesiod, Afer, Oppian, and others) and whether this reading was worth anything (Aubrey thought very highly of these authors). Aubrey brings to our attention other things as well: his opinion of the accuracy of other books; his opinion, and that of others, of the poetry of Cowley, Denham, and other poets; his reflections on the causes and nature of the Civil War. In all, the *Brief Lives* is far from a brief book, but the information and opinion it offers, in addition to the simple facts of birth, accomplishment, and death, give us an admirable sense of the total quality of life in the seventeenth century.

THE BRONZE HORSEMAN: A PETERSBURG TALE

Type of work: Poem

Author: Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)

Time: 1824

Locale: St. Petersburg, Russia
First published: 1841

Principal character:
EVGENI, a clerk

Alexander Pushkin was born in the last year of the eighteenth century and died thirty-seven years later in a duel. But within that brief span he not only revolutionized the language of Russian literature, but also wrote some of the finest poems to be found in that literature. It is generally held that the narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman*, an impressionistic romance written in 1833 and published posthumously in 1841, is Pushkin's masterpiece.

By 1831, Pushkin had completed the novel in verse entitled *Evgeni Onegin* and had planned on writing a sequel to it. This plan gradually changed to the idea of writing a new realistic poem centered on a new hero with the same name. In this poem Evgeni would be a St. Petersburg clerk of noble descent, and the poem was to include a short genealogy. Instead of the digressive, rambling style of *Evgeni Onegin*, this poem was concise and almost laconic. In 1836 a revised fragment from the first draft was published with the title "My Hero's Pedigree." But the poem was criticized by liberals as being essentially aristocratic, and it subsequently fell into obscurity. The heart of the poem, now relieved of the genealogical matter, was eventually published as *The Bronze Horseman*.

The subject of *The Bronze Horseman* is the St. Petersburg flood of 1824. To understand the poem the reader must have some knowledge of the historical background of the city. St. Petersburg was built at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Peter the Great as his capital and "window to the West." The city is located on the swampy shores of the Neva River, and there are various tales of the thousands of workers who died of disease and mistreatment during the building of the city. In the spring there were often floods, and in 1777 and

again in 1824 the flooding amounted to disaster. It is known that Pushkin contributed anonymously to the 1824 flood victims, and it is of the flood of that year that he wrote nine years later.

Evgeni, the victim-hero of *The Bronze Horseman*, is an insignificant clerk. From the genealogical fragment published in 1836 we know that he lost his social position and wealth through the incompetence of his father as a landlord. His hopes for the future now include only a bed, two chairs, a pot of cabbage soup, and a girl named Parasha. During the flood Evgeni saves himself by clinging to a statue of a lion on the Senate building directly opposite the famous bronze figure of Peter the Great by Falconet. Later Evgeni, learning that Parasha was killed by the flood, wanders, lost and dispirited, about the city for weeks. One night as he is walking through the Senate Square he sees the bronze statue again, and, thinking of the flood, curses it. Suddenly the metal horse seems to rear. Startled and frightened, Evgeni runs, but he hears behind him the clatter of hooves on the cobbled streets. From then on Evgeni avoids the statue, and when he must pass it, he lowers his gaze. Later, he is found drowned, and through a deed of charity he is buried.

The Bronze Horseman presents the struggle between the individual and society. The gap between Evgeni and what the statue represents is immense. Evgeni, the petty, insignificant clerk, is destroyed in spirit, mind, and body, and if Pushkin had not made his protest known, he would have gone unheard. Evgeni curses the statue of Peter the Great because he sees in the building of St. Petersburg an act defying both God and nature; people like Evgeni must pay for the splendor of the artificial capital. It is the sacrifice of the individual to the destiny of the na-

tion, where progress gives men neither peace nor happiness. In this context, Pushkin offers a sympathetic and compassionate description of Evgeni, the first "little man" of Russian literature, and he is followed by the creations of Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov.

Despite his sympathy for Evgeni, however, Pushkin speaks of Peter the Great in superlatives. He is "awesome," he is "magnificent," he is "like God's tempestuous wrath." Pushkin had already portrayed Peter in earlier works such as *The Blackamoor of Peter the Great* and *Poltava*. Peter the Great's energy and determination and his goal of making Russia the equal of any Western nation especially appealed to Pushkin. In the prologue to *The Bronze Horseman* Pushkin wrote, "Filled with grandiose thoughts he stood upon the shore where broke the lonely waves . . . Here will a great city be founded." The "he" is, of course, Peter. "I love thine [the city's] aspect graceful and severe, Neva's mighty stream, her granite banks." Pushkin has sometimes been called "the Bard of Peter the Great." Actually, he was the first Russian poet to accept the St. Petersburg period of Russian history. Despite Pushkin's description of the greatness of Peter, the reader must feel that Pushkin's underlying sympathy is with Evgeni. Pushkin does not attempt to reconcile the separate demands of state and individual. He leaves it to the reader to resolve the moral conflict or accept the tragedy as a necessary evil.

The laconic but expressive diction of *The Bronze Horseman* has presented difficulties to translators, for as the distinguished critic, D. S. Mirsky, has said, the language is charged with a tremendous weight of meaning. The description of the flood is realistic and devoid of superfluous detail, and yet the poem as a whole is highly impressionistic. Pushkin used the spoken language, but he was able to extract poetic meanings from

workaday words. It is easy to become annoyed with the assertion that Pushkin cannot be adequately translated into English, yet of all Russian writers it is probably most true in his case.

The Bronze Horseman was not published during Pushkin's lifetime. It is historically curious that Russia's golden age of poetry, of which Pushkin was the most outstanding representative, occurred at a time of great political repression. Not only was *The Bronze Horseman* suppressed by the censor, but Pushkin himself was subjected to various political pressures. Several times he was exiled from St. Petersburg, and the tsar once threatened to confine him in a monastery on the White Sea. In 1825 a rebellion of intellectuals and noblemen erupted in the Senate Square, and Pushkin alludes to the uprising. Yet despite these sympathies and the repression he suffered, Pushkin does not use *The Bronze Horseman* to condemn the state. His attitude is more stoical, as if it said that any government whether of the left or right will compromise the individual and will sacrifice the weak for the strong. History is merciless and injustice is often the price of progress, so it seems to him.

Besides the dominant theme of state and citizen, the poem also speaks of the violence of life. St. Petersburg itself exercises an oppressive power over Evgeni. It is cold stone and metal; instead of protecting people it merely intensifies their problems by its detachment and impersonality. The Neva is a destructive influence, which unpredictably ruins not only the creations of men but also men themselves. Evgeni cannot protect himself against such overwhelming forces: "his baffled wits gave way before these blows. The mutinous roar of the Neva and the winds were now resounding in his ears." Evgeni is destroyed by life itself. *The Bronze Horseman* remains as a memorial of the tragedy of an unknown man and as proof of the power of Pushkin's craft.

BROTHER ASS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Eduardo Barrios (1884-1963)

Time: The present

Locale: Santiago, Chile

First published: 1922

Principal characters:

BROTHER LÁZARO, who tells the story
BROTHER RUFINO, who practices cruel self-discipline
THE FATHER GUARDIAN
BROTHER ELIAS, a cruel and cynical man
GRACIA, the girl Lázaro once loved
MARÍA MERCEDES, her younger sister
SEÑORA JUSTINA, their mother

Unamuno, the Spanish philosopher, once declared that Spanish philosophy is based on mysticism. Certainly there is nothing more essentially Castilian than the work of the sixteenth century mystic Santa Teresa, whether one considers its spirit, its doctrine, or its style. Mysticism has been defined as a direct relationship with God or some other unifying principle of life. This merging of the individual consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness was not confined to Spain. Europe had other mystics, like Thomas á Kempis in Germany and Anselm of Canterbury in England, but nowhere were there more practitioners of mysticism than in Spain. The bibliographer Nicolás Antonio in his *Bibliotheca Hispana* lists more than 4,000 local mystic writers, including those who studied the relationship of the soul with God and the ascetics who sought the way of virtue and happiness through abnegation, love, and sacrifice.

Among the Spanish mystics were the poets Fray Luis de León and St. John of the Cross, as well as a host of prose writers with Santa Teresa de Jesús and Fray Luis de Granada the most outstanding.

Their speculation took two paths. To some, God was a metaphysical entity existing outside the soul, to be approached in a series of stages. To others, God was everpresent, dwelling within the soul, to be discovered by going deeper into one's own reality.

The beginning of the movement in Spain represented a revolt against the paganism of the Renaissance. It had its sources in Platonism and the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, and was spread through the influence of Franciscan and Erasmian doctrines. Also, the translation into Spanish in 1568 of a treatise on divine love by the Spanish Jew León Hebreo, called *Dialogues of Love*, supplied the metaphors and comparisons that were augmented by a terminology borrowed from human love.

The dearth of mystic writers in the New World makes one wonder about the reason, in view of their abundance in Spain. Because of the contemplative nature of mysticism, it is easy to attribute their scarcity to the activity demanded in the settlement of a new continent. Actually many of the priests in the New World were active in many other lines. Perhaps the intellectual caliber of most of the religious leaders in the early period provides an explanation. They were selected for their ability to tuck up their robes and slog through the trackless jungle to win converts among the illiterate aborigines who would not have understood even the most persuasive of mystical writing. Yet America had many writers, as is proved by the vast quantity of chronicles and travel books. Diego de Hojeda, a Peruvian priest-poet composed a twelve-book Christian epic, *La cristiada*. However, about the only practicing

mystic known was Saint Rosa of Lima, the first American saint. She lived largely withdrawn from the Peruvian world and left no important writing when she died at the age of thirty from the severity of her religious practices.

Brother Ass, by the Chilean Eduardo Barrios, practically the only mystic literary work of Spanish America, springs from many sources. Barrios' other novels mark him as a master of abnormal psychology. One critic noted that he excelled in painting abnormal personalities, not exactly neurotics but, rather, human beings whose emotional nature is overwrought and who end in insanity or spiritual disintegration. That is true of his earliest intensely poetic novel, actually a novelette, *El niño que enloqueció de amor* (*The Boy Who Went Crazy with Love*, or as generally translated, *Sentimental Madness*), which was published in 1915. It purports to be the diary of a ten-year-old boy who falls in love with Angelica, a friend and contemporary of his mother.

For his second long fiction, *Un perdido* (*A Lost Soul*), published in 1917, Barrios chose a Chilean city environment, in which the abnormally sentimental hero—suggested perhaps by Frédéric Moreau in Flaubert's *A Sentimental Education*—spends a life of maladjustment and frustration.

Among his other works are a more realistic novel of life on a nineteenth century Chilean farm, *Gran señor y rajadiblos* (*Great Man and Hell-raiser*), which came out in 1948, and *Los hombres del hombre* (*A Man of Many Aspects*), published two years later, a psychological novel in which each aspect of the protagonist assumes a different name. Different from all of them was his 1922 novel, *El hermano asno* (*Brother Ass*).

The author was able to vary his themes because he himself was a man of many facets. His father was an officer in the Chilean army during the War of the Pacific, and his mother came from occupied Peru. The child was born in Valparaíso,

Chile, but was taken by his mother to Peru shortly after the death of his father. At fifteen he was returned to Chile to attend a military school from which he ran away to live his own life as a bookkeeper in a Chilean nitrate mine, as a rubber worker in Peru, as a weight lifter in a circus, and as a traveling salesman hawking stoves in Buenos Aires. For a time he lived in a Franciscan monastery that gave him local color and inspiration for his greatest novel.

Its title comes from the words of the Italian Saint Francis of Assisi, who called his body "Brother Ass" and begged its pardon for treating it so harshly by fasting and scourging. The founder of the Franciscan Order enters the story again in connection with Brother Rufino's miracle of creating a friendly feeling between cats and mice, as Saint Francis considered all birds and beasts fellow creatures.

Brother Ass is supposed to be an autobiography by Brother Lázaro. According to Barrios, who retells his story, on the first page of the manuscript, in one corner and written in tiny letters and watery ink, as if the Brother had wished to whisper them, were three lines from the poetry of a Mexican poet of mystical tendencies, Amado Nervo, an invocation to the temple of his dreams, a place of deep silence, not dogma.

A medieval legend of a juggler in the Abbey of Cluny, later retold by Anatole France as "The Juggler of Notre Dame," has as its chief character an impoverished juggler who was given shelter in the abbey before Christmas. Others of the abbey were using their skills to make Christmas gifts for Our Lady. One wrote a poem, another composed a hymn, one painted a fresco, another carved a statue. But the juggler had no artistic ability. So he decided to contribute as best he was able by juggling before her shrine. When the priests, horror-stricken by such sacrilege, tried to drive him from the temple, Our Lady descended with a smile from her shrine and wiped the juggler's brow.

Brother Lázaro of *Brother Ass* was in a

similar predicament. He had no great ability. In fact, he was a failure as a priest. For more than seven years he had been a member of the Franciscan community without being ordained. He still felt unworthy to become even a good minor friar. A similar feeling is frequently described in mystic literature as "the dark night of the soul." In the approach to God, first to come is a purification of the soul and a feeling of illumination, followed by increasing love. But poor Brother Lázaro had discovered only that morning, while accompanying the Father Guardian to a nearby hospital to hear the confession of a dying man, that he could not discern the love of God in his fellow monks. Too clearly he saw the flaws of all of them, especially of Brother Rufino, like himself still unordained. Brother Rufino's obstacle was his life of penitence that prevented the completion of his studies; Brother Lázaro's difficulties were worries that his worldly past made him unfit for religious duties.

Going to the monastery garden to meditate about leaving the Church, he was interrupted by the appearance of another Franciscan, Brother John, bursting with news of a miracle. Brother Rufino, seeking as had the founder of the Order to be a friend of all creatures, had set scraps of food on a plate in his cell. Both cats and mice were sharing it in harmony.

More evidence of his lack of Christian qualities came to Brother Lázaro when he let the joking of Brother Elias at his expense enrage him so greatly that another brother felt impelled to draw him aside with a reminder of the need for brotherly love.

Animal brotherhood can go too far. The monks in the monastery discovered that when the mice were no longer frightened away by their natural enemies, they began devouring the wafers, the wax, and the oil. So, reluctantly, the Father Guardian ordered Brother Rufino to stop putting out food.

So far, Brother Ass has been like a medieval legend. Now comes the plotting

and complications to make it a story. At the communion, Brother Lázaro was sure he saw Gracia, the cause of his withdrawal from the world when she jilted him eight years earlier. However, it was not his former sweetheart, but her younger sister María Mercedes. He learned that Gracia had a family now, but the sister, much more beautiful, represented a temptation to the flesh that he had difficulty in resisting. He tried to discourage her from coming back to the monastery by refusing to help her see Brother Rufino, now considered a saint and adored by all the children.

However, Brother Rufino had also seen the lovely girl, and his soul, once filled with a mystical longing for perfection and humility, was tormented almost to madness. He tried to fight temptation by fasting. He became cadaverous. He refused to tell Brother Lázaro his trouble, except to say that it was the vileness of Brother Ass.

The more Brother Rufino tortured his flesh, the greater grew his saintly reputation. Even people from beyond the parish sought him out, imploring prayers and cures.

Eventually Brother Lázaro mastered his thoughts of María Mercedes and found peace in the monastery despite frequent sight of her and Gracia. Not so Brother Rufino. One day while in his cell, Brother Lázaro heard María Mercedes scream. He saw her rush out of Brother Rufino's cell, crying and with torn clothes. When he entered, the gaunt Franciscan was moaning that Brother Ass had been too strong for him. A few moments later he died.

The girl brought no charges, but her angry mother arrived as the bells were tolling for the funeral of Brother Rufino. She cried that the dead man had attacked her daughter. That was the moment when Brother Lázaro made to God his supreme gift. He took the accusation upon himself and confessed that he was the guilty one.

Later he told the truth to the Father

Provincial, but it was decided that for the prestige of Brother Rufino and for the good of the Order, Brother Lázaro should be the one publicly considered guilty. He would be transferred to a distant province. He agreed to the decision and prayed that God would accept his sacrifice and make of him a good minor Brother of his order.

Eduardo Barrios began his literary career with a volume of short stories published in Iquique. Later he turned to the theater, first with a brief dialogue, *Papa and Mama*. Then in 1912 came a satire on government bureaucracy, *Por el decoro* (*For the Good of the Office*); in 1913 he published the first of his fanta-

sies, *Lo que niega la vida* (*What Life Denies*), taking place in the soul rather than in any definite locality; and in 1916 appeared his best play, *Vivir* (*Life*), a psychological tragedy filled with frustrated women. However, the impossibility of earning a livelihood in Chile's theaters turned him to novel writing, a profession he combined with such occupations as Chile's Minister of Education, and Director of the National Library. When he died in Santiago in 1963, in his eightieth year, Barrios was esteemed as the dean of Chilean literature and the man chiefly responsible for the present popularity and high quality of its psychological fiction.

THE BROWN DECADES

Type of work: Cultural history

Author: Lewis Mumford (1895-)

First published: 1931

The Brown Decades is a study of the building arts in America between 1865 and 1895. It is based on the assumption that these years were the autumn period of American civilization; that they followed the brief "renaissance" summer which was ended by the Civil War. Mr. Mumford begins by asserting that the prevailing style of life in this period was not conducive to the arts. The old style of life, which was quiet, ordered, and based on a nonindustrial culture, gave way to a new one dominated by business and production. This change endowed the postwar decades with two kinds of problems. The first was the moral problem, and this is a subject that has been gone over thoroughly by the historians. The Gilded Age was an age of excess, and its central figures were those who achieved success by heroic dishonesty. They were inclined to look upon industrial expansion as purely a matter of dollars and cents; accordingly, they endowed this period with a brutal system of labor and an extraordinarily ugly series of centers of production. The second problem

faced by Mr. Mumford is closely allied to the first: the new money that went into burgeoning factories and buildings and bridges had the aim principally of practicality, and the urban centers of America were created with the built-in problems which are today so evident.

These problems were of two orders, Mr. Mumford points out. First, the natural landscape, particularly in the East, was sacrificed to the interests of production. Factories and especially railroads dominated the structure of the cities and of the countryside into which they swiftly overflowed. Second, the cities themselves took on the chaotic, vertical character they continue to exhibit. They became overcrowded and unhealthful, and they forever united in America the large city with the large slum.

The heroes of *The Brown Decades* are our great naturalists, engineers, conservationists, and architects. It was these men, Mr. Mumford declares, who, laboring against the odds of bad taste and mass indifference, in a manner redeemed this thirty-year period. The first of these is

Henry David Thoreau, who, although not directly connected with reforms in our cities, was the principal figure to direct our attention back to the beauty and values of nature. A second naturalist praised by Mumford is George Perkins Marsh, the first man in America to deal practically with the idea of human ecology. He pointed out in his *Man and Nature*, published in 1864, that geography was by no means a study of natural formations and divisions, rather, it had to be understood as a branch of ecology, because geography was continually in the process of change as a result of human action. The moral and aesthetic influence of men such as Thoreau and Marsh, Mr. Mumford asserts, affected and in a manner created our great school of conservationists. He points out that conservationism began actually in our cities, and that Frederick Olmstead, the designer of Central Park in New York City, was just as important as wilderness figures such as Thoreau, John Muir, and John Audubon. Indeed, the creation of Central Park is one of the central episodes of *The Brown Decades*, since it brought into the open the great conflict between those who wanted land for purposes of rental and taxation and those who conceived of it as necessary for beauty and recreation. The landscape park, according to Mumford, was an affront to the reigning business ethic. It was to prove in New York and in other cities, however, both beautiful and useful. Olmstead justified his park by pointing out that cities did not have to grow haphazardly; in a famous statement, and one basic to our present conception of urban development, he demonstrated that a park was not simply an adjunct of a city, but its proper center. As he proved in Central Park, the landscape could become important for its direction of transportation and for the creation of new residential neighborhoods.

The men who worked with nature are not the only heroes of *The Brown Decades*. The Roeblings, those engineers who designed and built the Brooklyn Bridge,

are central to Mr. Mumford's thesis that the time was saved from artistic negation by a few men of great learning and strong will. The importance of the Brooklyn Bridge was not only that it was the first attempt to expand the city from Manhattan, but that it was one of the first combinations of engineering and artistic design. The steel cables of the suspension, Mr. Mumford believes, were no more important than the stone of the supporting masonry and the design of towers and piers. The bridge was the first public structure since the Washington Monument to be of architectural as well as engineering importance. In the use of steel as structural support it opened up a whole new world of uses, and in uniting metal with masonry it brought the customary materials of construction into a new age of their design.

There are many great architects whose works are studied in *The Brown Decades*: principal among them are Henry Richardson, John Root, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Richardson is singled out as the man responsible for the creation of a new architecture, a man whose influence equaled that of Christopher Wren. It was Richardson who departed from the old formulation that Gothic architecture was suited for churches and "classical" for other public buildings. He brought back to life a massive Romanesque style, and his libraries, railroad stations, and tall buildings demonstrated that a variety of styles was available for any form. He departed from traditional practice when he considered windows not as merely parts of a façade, but as integral to interior design. And he contracted with the best artists America had to offer for their advice on color, design and proportion. He was *par excellence* the artist in masonry, and he handed on to his successors a real feeling for the texture of his medium.

Root carried the principles of Richardson about as far as they would go; his Monadnock Building is one of the great monuments of the Chicago of the late

nineteenth century. It is fifteen stories tall, an immense height for a non-steel structure. Its importance, according to Mumford, is its simplicity and its mastery of form. Instead of creating an enormous brick box, the kind of thing which, purely in terms of dollars and sense, would have been most practical, he lavished a tremendous amount of time and energy on the imaginative design of window-units and spacing, making the Monadnock one of the lightest and airiest buildings of the century, in spite of the fact that it was at the same time one of the most massive.

Louis Sullivan, according to Mumford, was the most original and inventive of the architects of this period. It was he who designed Chicago's enormous Auditorium Building, a triumph of simplicity, formal design, and function. He thought out a theory of the skyscraper, which, although confined by his premise that the unit of construction was the steel cage, worked out in practice to such masterpieces as the Wainwright Building in St. Louis (1891), and the Schiller Building

(1892) and the Gage Building (1898), both of Chicago. Sullivan was most important, Mumford suggests, for the amount and kind of ornamentation he brought to buildings of masonry and steel. This was for him the great realm of individuality, and he brought to the building trades a renewed use of sculpture and design. Perhaps most important, Sullivan was a literate man, and he brought into articulation many ideas that had been only half expressed, and badly at that. He conceived of architecture as a "social manifestation," and he held strongly to the organic view of building design. Structures had not only to express their function individually, but were obliged to fit into a larger community. He went on record for spaciousness and wrote that those who allow congestion and disharmony in the design of buildings were bringing "outlawry" into the life of cities. In short, he symbolized the great and thoughtful amount of social consciousness that distinguished the best minds of the Brown Decades.

A BURNT-OUT CASE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Graham Greene (1904-)

Time: The present

Locale: The Belgian Congo

First published: 1961

Principal characters:

QUERRY, a spiritually maimed man of arid heart

DR. COLIN, an atheist doctor serving at a leprosarium in the Belgian Congo

MONTAGU PARKINSON, a news correspondent

ANDRÉ RYCKER, the manager of a palm-oil factory

MARIE RYCKER, his wife

THE SUPERIOR, head of the White Fathers mission and the leprosarium

FATHER THOMAS, a credulous monk

DEO GRATIAS, Query's native servant, a burnt-out leper case

The novels of Graham Greene suggest those landscapes of the spirit that we see frequently in impressionistic paintings. Sometimes the scene is a bleak wasteland over which a sad, cold wind blows, twist-

ing a few withered leaves on the boughs of stunted, storm-wrenched trees. The ground is bare and ashy. Behind the stark outlines of the trees the sky appears dark and menacing; before long snow will

begin to fall quietly on this place of blight and desolation. Again, the scene may be a jungle riotously choked with monstrous plants. Leaves hang motionless in the heavy, fetid air. Strange flowers bloom, their hot yellows and sultry reds set against the poisonous green of the vegetation. From a tree limb a snake hangs like a drooping vine. A beast peers through the cane stalks or stands motionless over a prostrate figure lying on the bank of a river flowing through this world of silence, rank growth, and decay.

Images of the jungle and the wasteland merge in *A Burnt-Out Case* to provide a contrast between the tangled emotionalism and moral corruption in a man's past and the sterile emptiness of spiritual death in his present. The scene of the novel is a mission hospital and leprosarium maintained by the White Fathers, a minor order of Catholic monks, on a remote river in the Belgian Congo.

This is Conrad country, but in this novel it is described without Conrad's poetic, brooding vision and intensity. Perhaps Graham Greene was aware of the difference when he wrote in his dedication that his Congo is a region of the mind. There is another important difference as well. Conrad sent his Marlow on a voyage of discovery: Africa, with its heat, jungle, and tribal mysteries, becomes the symbol of the greater darkness in the heart of man where we are all secret sharers. Querry, the central character of Mr. Greene's novel, carries his own darkness of spirit with him. He is the Roman Catholic of arid heart. Having passed beyond all that the world calls good or evil, he asks for nothing, and he has nothing to share. When the river boat reaches the mission landing, he disembarks. He has traveled as far as he can go; beyond there is only the overgrown jungle. Dr. Colin, the doctor at the mission, asks him if he is stopping there. Querry makes the only answer when he answers that the boat goes no farther.

Querry—Mr. Greene is adroit in his use of symbols—is that phenomenon of

modern society, the burnt-out case, a term used to describe a leper in whom the disease has been halted, but not before it has eaten away its victim piecemeal. In this mutilated condition he no longer feels the excruciating pain of those who are taking the cure for their malady and whose bodies are still whole. Querry's mutilation is spiritual, not physical, but the results are the same. He has lost the capacity to feel.

Once the monks and Dr. Colin have decided that their strange guest has not come to the mission to satisfy a morbid interest concerning leprosy, they accept him with little curiosity. They learn that he is a lapsed Catholic, a matter of concern to some of the fathers, of complete indifference to the atheist doctor, but that is all. What they do not know is that Querry is world-famous, a distinguished church architect and a notorious womanizer. But the buildings he designed and his affairs with women had been little more than the expression of his own absorbing self-love. Now the creation of beauty and the beauty of women have become meaningless to him, and he is in flight from his past. No matter how isolated a man may feel, however, and regardless of the causes of his spiritual death, no man is an island. Before long Querry is doing small tasks about the mission, often as the doctor's assistant in the infirmary. One night he has a glimpse of what he might be seeking. Deo Gratias, the crippled, burnt-out native who has been assigned to him as his servant, disappears unaccountably, and Querry goes looking for him in the jungle. During the night he spends with the exhausted native he hears Deo Gratias mutter something about Pendelé, the place of innocence, simple pleasures, and joy. Querry transforms into terms of his own past his servant's words about Pendelé.

Then the world intrudes upon his refuge, first in the person of André Rycker, a *colon* who manages a palm-oil plantation, and then in the curious prying of Montagu Parkinson, a vulgar journalist to

whom Rycker has communicated the fact that the guest at the mission is *the* Querry. (Rycker had recognized him after reading a magazine cover story about the famous architect.) With the help of Rycker and information gained from a sentimental priest who places the wrong interpretation of the shepherd and his lost sheep on Querry's night search for his servant, Parkinson proceeds to write several sensational stories in an attempt to make Querry look like another Albert Schweitzer, possibly a St. Francis, or at least a saint manqué. The fact that Querry is designing a new hospital for the mission seems to substantiate his report. This presentation of Querry as a sainted, whole man provides a titillating accompaniment to a morbid rehash of all the scandals in Querry's life, including the suicide of one of his mistresses. Parkinson is as horrible as his journalistic style and as false as the principle by which he operates, the belief that anything is true if it is believed.

Having come to Africa to report on the native riots, he is going ahead with his plans to exploit Querry after the political disturbance has died down. He is on the scene when Querry innocently spends a night in the same hotel with Rycker's wife. He says that his version of the story is as likely to be believed as Querry's. He also tells Querry that he intended to build him up, but now it may make a better story if he tears him down.

Melodrama, common in Greene's fiction, sets the scene for the final tragedy. Marie Rycker, trying childishly to be revenged on the husband she despises, allows him to believe that Querry is the real father of her child. Rycker follows Querry to the mission and shoots him. Parkinson, who could have told the truth about the dead man's innocence but failed to do so, writes an article headed "Death of a Hermit. The Saint Who Failed." He also sends as a decoration for

Querry's grave a wreath, supposedly from the readers of his magazine and bearing an inscription credited to Browning: "Nature I loved and next to Nature Art." Parkinson's quotations from the anthology poets are as mistaken as the facts in his lurid news stories.

In his dedication, Graham Greene speaks of this novel as an effort to express different types of belief, half-belief, and non-belief. This announcement suggests at the outset that Greene intends to pigeonhole his characters and show them as limited and recognizable types. The effect of the novel, however, is quite different. His people spill over as they would in life. They are innocent and guilty, wise and foolish, skeptical and devout. Marie Rycker is in many ways an innocent child, for example, but she is the cause of Querry's death. A priest, Father Thomas, believes what he wants to believe when he sees Querry as a man destined for sainthood. Rycker, the failed priest, seeks an object of veneration outside himself and thinks that Querry is the man to revere; the murder he commits is more the sign of his own weakness than the act of an outraged husband. Only Dr. Colin, the humane atheist, and Parkinson, a monster of abstraction and a builder of the big lie, are completely themselves in their uncomplicated and thoroughgoing traits.

The quality of ambiguity exhibited in presenting his view of man's morality and faith is the secret of the appeal Graham Greene holds for many readers. He raises questions; he clarifies; he withholds answers. He suggests by indirection the nature and mystery of man's relation to God. His concerns, bitter, disillusioned, argumentative, make *A Burnt-Out Case* a serious novel, a religious parable on the possibility of redemption. William Faulkner once wrote that the world's solution lies in the suffering of man. This is Graham Greene's theme as well.

CALL IT SLEEP

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry Roth (1906-)

Time: 1907-1913

Locale: Lower East Side, New York City

First published: 1934

Principal characters:

DAVID SCHEARL, a young Jewish immigrant boy

GENYA SCHEARL, his mother

ALBERT SCHEARL, his father

JOE LUTER, a print shop foreman

BERTHA, Genya's sister, David's aunt

YUSSIE MINK, David's friend

ANNIE MINK, his sister

LEO DUGOVKA, another of David's friends

NATHAN STERNOWITZ, a widower, later Bertha's husband

POLLY STERNOWITZ, and

ESTHER STERNOWITZ, his daughters

RABBI YIDEL PANKOWER, David's teacher

Henry Roth's only novel was first published in 1934, a year that produced Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, Graham Greene's *It's a Battlefield*, John O'Hara's *Appointment in Samarra*, William Saroyan's *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, and Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*. The same year saw the publication of forty-three other works considered memorable enough to be listed in the second edition of *Annals of English Literature*. *Call It Sleep* is not listed, nor is the novel or its author referred to in such compendia as Willard Thorp's *American Writing in the Twentieth Century* or Herzberg's *Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*.

But the novel survived its early neglect. For *Call It Sleep* is one of those books written in the wrong generation. Just as the poems of Emily Dickinson and the great whale book of Herman Melville waited decades for full appreciation, so Henry Roth's book came to full public attention thirty years after its publication in 1934. One obvious reason for its success in the 1960's is its subject, life in the Jewish Ghetto. In the meantime novelists such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth had made the

American Jew significant in contemporary literature. It is no wonder that the American public should respond to another book on this popular subject, especially after it has been called one of the most distinguished novels telling of Jewish life in America.

But the real achievement of the book derives more from technique than from subject. The chief merits of the novel are its harsh but poetic realism, its remarkable power of vivid evocation, and its technical control. Realism implies a picture of life as it is. The life Roth chooses to portray is that of an Austrian Jewish boy enduring four acutely and painfully formative years in the New York ghettos. Reminiscent of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and of Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, *Call It Sleep* portrays the day-to-day existence of David Schearl with a sophisticated accumulation of sensuous detail. One critic, in fact, believes it must be the noisiest novel ever written, so vivid are the sounds of shouts, groans, whispers, insults, streetcars, clocks, feet tramping, mouths chewing.

Detail for its own sake does not make literature, however. Roth's success is in the relevance of the detail and in the controlled use of detail to stir and alter

emotion in the reader. Aunt Bertha, for example, is a bawdy, loud-mouthed woman who exists as a foil to sensitive, fearful David. Through her Roth evokes both the truth of David's uncomfortable life and the necessary sympathy that the reader must have if the novel is to come alive.

Call It Sleep is a masterpiece, and to read it is to be astounded at its neglect. It is difficult to think of another writer (Dickens? Wolfe?) who can recall the agonies of childhood with such urgency and immediacy. David Schearl is a child of his race, his time, his environment, but he is all children as well; one experiences something close to discomfort as his memory is jogged by the universality of David's search for understanding of, and reconciliation with, the world about him.

David's world is presented mainly through a careful documentation of the boy's consciousness, but Roth, in a brilliant stroke, begins with a prologue that creates both the physical and psychological environment with which David will have to struggle. We are taken first to a steamer leaving Ellis Island in 1907. Among the immigrants are David, then about two years old, and his mother, Genya. Albert, the father, had come to America earlier and the family is now to be reunited. But in Albert's behavior there is a coldness markedly different from the outspoken joy that pervades other such groups around him. His remarks to his wife and son are contemptuous and accusatory; in a gesture full of shame and pathetic pride, he snatches David's old-country hat and hurls it into the river simply because he does not want his boy to look like an immigrant.

The prologue is wonderfully graphic, but it is also important as a source of basic themes and metaphors. First, it establishes the Schearls as people in an alien culture, a circumstance that colors the whole novel. Secondly, it establishes another and more profound kind of alienation existing between mother and son, on the one hand, and father on the

other. Finally, the prologue suggests a metaphor that underlies the entire work: the voyage that David must take into the alien world of complex experience. In this sense, the sheltering arms of Genya are the old world; David is the immigrant in life who must leave their haven and seek his own meanings in the new culture of maturity. It is one of the particular triumphs of *Call It Sleep* that these closely related themes lead us from the surface of life to the depths of inner experience, and finally into a pattern that lies under the lives of us all.

The stages of David's three-year voyage shape the four books into which the novel is divided. David is six as the narrative begins. His attachment to his mother is profound, not only for herself but also for shelter given because she stands between him and the icy contempt of his father. Critics have pointed out that the mother-son relationship is strongly Oedipal. Irving Howe has had the wisdom also to observe that through David's observation of the placid and beautiful Genya we are made to relive a relationship that is profoundly touching to most men, whatever its psychiatric implications.

In sharp contrast is the brilliantly realized character of the father: aloof, suspicious, gullible, eaten away by a tragic pride. Albert is at war with the world. His great fear, induced partly by an awareness of his own foreignness and partly by some deeper insecurity, is that he will be laughed at, cheated, made a fool. And so, of course, he is; in an early episode David's immature but meticulous consciousness records that Albert's foreman, Luter, is flattering Albert only in order to be with Genya.

The first two books are largely concerned with the traumas of David's broadening experience: the Luter episode, a repugnant sexual encounter with a neighborhood girl, a terrible thrashing by Albert. In the second book David watches the courting of Aunt Bertha by the laconic Sternowitz and listens in con-

fused fascination to his mother's account of an earlier love affair in Russia. Throughout these chapters Roth portrays with great skill a young boy's developing awareness of sexuality, particularly his uneasy realization that his mother is also a sexual being.

The third book is centered in the Hebrew school, the *cheder*, where David's intellect is awakened by the rabbi, Yidel Pankower. Pankower is one of the great achievements of the novel, a tragi-comic figure of classic proportions. The *cheder* dances to the tunes of his invective. David learns rapidly, but one afternoon a verse from Isaiah puzzles him: It tells how Isaiah saw the Lord seated upon a throne and was afraid. Then a seraph touched a fiery coal to Isaiah's lips, and he heard God speak. David yearns to ask about that coal but does not get the chance. At home he asks his mother to explain God. He is brighter than day, she says. And He has all power.

On the first day of Passover there is no school and David wanders toward the East River. He stares at the river, meditating on God's brightness. The experience is almost a mystical trance, but the dazzling contemplation is broken by three boys who come up and taunt him. They can show him magic if he will go to the car tracks and drop a piece of scrap metal in the groove between the tracks. David does so. Suddenly there is a blinding light. David is terrified. His child's mind connects God's power and light with the electrical flash.

David sometimes does not get along with the rough boys of the neighborhood. One day he discovers the roof of the flat as a place of refuge. From there he sees a boy with blond hair flying a kite. Leo Dugovka is confident and carefree and he has skates. Leo is surprised to learn that David knows nothing about the Cross or the Mother and Child. David desperately wants Leo to like him.

Next day David goes on a long walk to Aunt Bertha's candy shop to see if she has any skates he can use. The living

quarters behind the store are cramped, dark, and filthy. Bertha tells him to get Esther and Polly out of bed while she watches the store.

Aunt Bertha has no skates. David goes to Leo's flat. There he is attracted to a picture of Jesus and to a rosary. Leo is sexually interested in David's two cousins after he hears about them. Next day Leo promises David the rosary if he will take him to see the girls. Though uncomfortable, David agrees. Leo is successful with Esther, but they are caught in the act by Polly. She tattles.

David is terrified; he will be implicated. At *cheder* in the afternoon he reads nervously before a visiting rabbi. Bursting into tears, he entangles himself in hysterical lies fabricated out of the secret in his mother's past. He says his mother is dead and that his father was a gentle organist in Europe.

While the puzzled rabbi goes to clear up matters with the Schearls, Nathan is angrily blaming David for what happened to Esther. The rabbi soon learns that David has lied, but the mention of the organist arouses Albert's suspicion. He accuses his wife of unfaithfulness and believes David to be someone else's child. Genya cannot convince him he is wrong.

When Bertha and Nathan arrive, David, terrified, runs into the street while his elders argue violently. Images, recollections, and fears spin through his mind. Finding a steel milk-dipper, he desperately decides to produce God again at the car tracks. At first nothing happens as he inserts the dipper; then, suddenly, he receives a terrific electric shock that knocks him out. The flash draws a crowd of anxious people, but David has not been hurt seriously. Even his father seems slightly relieved that he is all right.

Soon it is night and he can go to sleep and forget it all. In sleep all the images of the past—sights, sounds, feelings—become vivid and alive. While life was painful and terrifying, in sleep he triumphs.

A fundamental aspect of Roth's tri-

umph is his mastery of style. The dialect of a slum street is rendered with unshrinking fidelity; the cultural dilemma of the immigrant is touchingly demonstrated in the disparity between David's American street-language and the dignified language of his home, representing a translation of the family's native Yiddish. When the reader enters David's stream-of-consciousness, language becomes direct experience, and *Call It Sleep* takes its place beside the great lyrical novels of the century.

It would be tempting to summarize

Roth's achievement through comparisons. One could say that as an example of urban naturalism *Call It Sleep* rivals the best of Dreiser and Farrell; that in some elements of its stylistic virtuosity it rivals the work of Joyce; that as a novel of growing up it must be ranked with *Huckleberry Finn* and *Look Homeward, Angel*. Yet such comparisons are beside the point. What one most admires about the novel, what must make it survive, is the incomparable richness of its experience re-created in the totality and finality of the work of art.

THE CANNIBAL

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Hawkes (1925-)

Time: Winter, 1945, and Winter, 1914

Locale: Spitzen-on-the-Dein, a town in Germany

First published: 1949

Principal characters:

MADAME STELLA SNOW, aristocratic landlady of a rooming house

ERNST SNOW, her husband

HERMAN SNOW, his father, proprietor of a Brauhaus

JUTTA, Stella's younger sister, a tenant

SELVAGGIA, Jutta's little girl

JUTTA'S YOUNG SON, unnamed

ZIZENDORF, Jutta's lover, a leader of insurrection, a tenant

A CENSUS-TAKER, Zizendorf's friend, a tenant

THE DUKE, a tenant

HERR STINTZ, a school teacher, a tenant

BALAMIR, escapee from asylum, living in the basement

GERTA, Stella and Jutta's nurse

CROMWELL, an English traitor

LEEVEY, an American soldier

THE MAYOR

MILLER, the pastor

STELLA'S MOTHER AND FATHER

In *The Cannibal*, one of the most accomplished American "experimental" novels of the 1940's, John Hawkes makes Spitzen-on-the-Dein representative of Germany during the early stages of the Allied occupation after World War II; it is also the scene of an extended flashback to World War I. With the collapse of normality in every phase of their daily lives during both wars, the people of the town move upon a nightmare landscape. Even in the midst of almost total ruin,

aristocratic, majestic Madame Stella Snow, who runs a boardinghouse, feels a sense of community. Most of the major characters are tenants in Stella's house. Stella's sister Jutta, who was about the age of her little girl, Selvaggia, at the end of the first war, has always lived a life of rigid restraint, but now, neither man nor woman, she wallows in listless sexuality with Zizendorf, leader of the insurrection, while the drunken Census-Taker watches. The Duke, a brave tank com-

mander during the war, is already in pursuit of Jutta's effeminate son when the novel begins. Resentful of Stella, Jutta fears her family's and the Duke's aristocratic heritage and has no sense of patriotism. The only person Selvaggia fears is Herr Stintz, the one-eyed school teacher, who plays a dirge on his tuba every night and who is perversely attracted to her. Balamir, escapee from the local asylum, lives in the basement; the real or imagined son of the Kaiser, he thinks of Stella as the Queen Mother.

Fragmented images of the landscape, past and present, are repeated as haunting motifs throughout the novel. The scenic props of the glorious German past rot in the present: flags, brass band instruments. The architecture is expressive of the Germanic concept of the race's soul: the focus in 1914 is the *Sportswelt Brauhaus* and Stella's ancestral house; in 1945, it is the asylum and Stella's rooming house. The novel begins, repeatedly refers to, and ends with the asylum, situated just outside town. Animals make their lairs in rooms vacated by patients. Balamir and his brother inmates do not realize they are out; they merely move on a landscape that is an objectification of their own private lunacies. The novel is rife with images expressive of the Nordic-Teutonic-Prussian heroic stance and nationalistic tradition; of the relationship between father and son, an exalted notion of family, seen in terms of generations perpetuating ancestral pride; of blustering notions of masculinity and of the enduring long-suffering of females. The degeneration of the race is manifested in dry, sterile, impotent copulation—promiscuity, prostitution, perversion; infected men and women with shaven heads dance a waltz like zombies in a storehouse on the asylum grounds; Allied parachutists rape women whose vaginas are packed with poison; pregnant women expose themselves to death by freezing, while others suckle children as old as six; German soldiers carry suicidal cyanide capsules. These people struggle

to survive in a town where there are no clocks, no postal service, no radios, no newspapers, no fluid for embalming corpses; where all the keys for the machines are welded together; where excrement burns in pits, gas explodes in sewers, typhoid breeds in wells, and flabby rubber rafts, corpses, and fog drift in the canal where the ghosts of British tank soldiers come to drink. Across this landscape creep maimed horses, dry cows, terrified birds, mangy chickens, wild dogs that snarl at train wheels, rabid monkeys, and rats. When ravaging animals are turned loose in a world of violent death, mutilation, and disease, and become assimilated into the human population, people begin to respond to one another in animal terms and resort, finally, to cannibalism. In 1914 and again in 1945, an incredible cold grips the landscape; then a damp air descends, the cold dissolves into a fog, and moonlight reveals things soft with rot and the final acts of horror.

Although he has been compared with Kafka, Hawkes resembles him not at all in technique. Kafka's seemingly unreal world is presented rationally. While Hawkes' images seize the reader and hold him in a tension created by forces of repulsion and abnormal attraction, he deliberately attempts to break the illusion of reality by employing literary elements and devices that act upon one another in such a way that the dream becomes reality, making questions of literary appropriateness irrelevant. Elements of parody, black humor, lyricism, mock sentimentality, farce, and the conscious, controlled use of clichés cause frequent, sudden, and absurd shifts in tone and perspective. Through an eclectic method that is more often expressionistic than impressionistic, Hawkes attempts to project a series of images that reflect the mental climate of an ignobly defeated people whose aspirations were pathologically nationalistic. Hawkes uses a point of view strategy which makes great demands of the reader; if the reader co-operates, he finds himself in the same relation to the author

that exists between the novel's victims and victimizers. Obsessed by the past, Zizendorf, editor of the town's defunct newspaper, *The Crooked Zeitung*, is the surrounding narrator. As the present action begins, he is preparing to kill Leevey, the Jewish-American soldier who patrols one third of the nation on a rusty motorcycle as its sole overseer. Zizendorf's monomaniacal purpose is to free his people, rebuild the town, and resuscitate the old nationalistic pride. Thus it is appropriate that all the streams of consciousness, the nighttime reveries and nightmares of the other characters, converge and become assimilated in him. He is the voice, the mind, the collective subconscious of vanquished Germany.

With this device, so expressive of his theme, Hawkes shifts frequently from one character to another—illogically, in view of Zizendorf's limited access to the raw materials of his narrative; but there is a kind of Jungian truth in this technique. The shifts are made without preparation, as thoughts shift erratically in a deranged mind. The reader is into a scene; then, suddenly, he is briefly somewhere else; then he is thrust into yet another character's field of vision. Sometimes the shift is made within a sentence. Though there are few scenes of sustained length, Hawkes will present, after a relatively long scene, a series of brief images, bringing the separate action of each character forward a little, usually with ironic effect.

But there is almost none of the sustained stream of consciousness passages one finds in Virginia Woolf or Joyce. Hawkes' characters simply respond to the stimuli the author provides for all their senses. In Hawkes' surreal (but all too real) world, the reader's senses are assaulted by violent odors, ghastly sights, eerie sounds, foul tastes; and he feels the touch of soft rot. The characters are defined in terms of extreme experiences to which they are always subordinate. A relative lack of individualization gives the effect of a single,

many-faceted character. Thus, the all-embracing mind of Zizendorf, the Hitlerian temperament re-emergent, becomes the reader's own consciousness; to his horror, he discovers that it is a consciousness in which values of all kinds are suspended, just as in a dream we commit or witness atrocities upon which we make no judgments. What the reader experiences are extreme moments of bestiality, not as a social creature, but as a beast would experience them—purely.

Hawkes uses a technique that is more poetic and cinematic than novelistic. The shifts among points of view are made by a method of juxtaposition, or montage. The juxtaposition of poetic images, which are charged with vivid visual components expressive of theme, character, and event, has the effect one experiences when two shots in a movie are juxtaposed to create a third dimension of emotion or thematic significance. The rhythm of the movie camera is, at its best, the rhythm of poetry rather than that of prose. The montage is essentially the method of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which, along with "The Hollow Men," is one poetic influence upon *The Cannibal*. Eliot's principle of the objective correlative is basic to this novel. Hawkes externalizes the internal neuroses of a people. The method of juxtaposition operates throughout the book, within each section, each scene, and often within each paragraph and sentence, creating a kind of continuity that proceeds according to a logic quite different from that of a conventional novel. Here again the effect of pure vision—of things seen as they are—is apparent. Hawkes' images come to the reader as though from electronic impulses bounced off the moon rather than from an author; with the distance of a movie director, he achieves control and restraint in the way he handles images which assail us as though poured out chaotically by an extremely undisciplined writer. The roving camera eye—going in and out of focus, zooming in like a telephoto lens for a microscopic

scrutiny of, for instance, the mouth of the dead merchant clotted with cobwebs—is being very coldly guided. A vividly descriptive style which employs all the devices of rhetoric enhances the impact of these images.

There is as little order in the sequence of images as there is in the spread of shrapnel; as though a camera caught it in slow motion, that is what we see—the explosion of a mine which the reader steps on in Hawkes' field of view. Just as there are lines of force in an explosion that give it a unity, which the victim cares little to imagine, so beneath the apparent chaos of the novel's images and occasional scenes, a pattern of events may be discerned. The novel is in three parts; the present action in 1945 surrounds an extended flashback to events in 1914. This structure emphasizes the oneness of the two wars; and within each chapter the method of juxtaposition conveys a sense of the simultaneity of all events.

If in Part I Hawkes tries to make the reader feel he is having hallucinations, he deliberately eases him into a rather traditional narrative occurring around 1914. Stella sings in the Sportswelt Brauhaus; Ernst, the son of Herman Snow, the proprietor, falls in love with her. A coward, Ernst resents his father, a virile lover, sportsman, and soldier, who urges him to "join in the chase"; sullenly, bitterly observing the masculine way of the frequenters of the Brauhaus, Ernst, too, wants to earn a place in Valhalla. When Cromwell, a friend of Herman, takes Stella home in a carriage, Ernst desperately runs after them. An English traitor, Cromwell admires the German spirit of nationalism, tradition of heroism, and ideals of conquest; he is eager to see it demonstrated in a prolonged war.

War begins the next day. Hawkes presents the members of Stella's family, including the children's nurse Gerta. The mother dislikes the world she sees, but the ninety-year-old father, a general, who is dying, shouts "War!" at breakfast and "Victory!" at noon, thinking the war

is already over. Women and children, Hawkes shows, are the innocent victims of such insane masculinity: a lone British plane falls in the marketplace and the mother is killed. Stella nurses the old general, who dies with his plumed helmet on his chest. Already prefigured in the death of Stella's parents, the decline of the German nation is symbolized by the death of the old horse that moves between the lower world of dogs and the upper world of the mountains where Stella and Ernst go on their honeymoon. A parallel to this old horse is the legless, headless statue of a horse in the square, a monument to the heroic past. When Cromwell arrives in the mountains, gleefully reciting the details of the war and praising the German troops, Ernst and Stella return to Stella's house; in her father's room, Ernst is dying of a fever.

A further suggestion of decline is Herman Snow's failure as a soldier and a lover; he encounters Gerta in the wreckage of the Brauhaus where she goes in the course of her promiscuous prowling among soldiers. Hawkes' montage method operates with great rapidity, shuttling back and forth over the ruined town (images of which are a mild foreshadowing of the devastation of World War II) between Gerta and Herman and Stella and Ernst; the strong women take care of the weak men. The role of coincidence in such a world is demonstrated when Gerta brings Herman to the very room where Stella is nursing Ernst. Herman, who had imagined, in his own delirium, of passing on to Ernst the spirit of love and war, accuses his son of "feigning."

At the end of the 1914 section, Hawkes focuses on Jutta. A student of architecture when the war began, she has gone into a convent and is seriously ill with a fever; she is a victim of the stern love of the mother superior and is violated by the Ober-Leutnant who is staying overnight at the convent. It is her vision of life that Hawkes would have us see: not miraculous, yet clear; not right, though undeniable. The perspective on

life which circumstances give these people is one divested of a moral dimension; it is simply clear (and by it we see clearly and are terrified) and undeniable (though under "normal" circumstances we daily deny it to maintain our precarious sanity).

By returning, at the opening of Part III, to Zizendorf where he left him on the embankment of the Autobahn, Hawkes makes his structure comment thematically upon his raw material: the present encloses and carries forward the past. The bizarre parallels of nightmares pervade the novel, merging past and present. While the Duke pursues Jutta's son, Jutta, who has been taking care of the drunken Census-Taker, sleeps; but her little girl, Selvaggia, watches for her brother at the window. Passing through the sleeping mother's room, Herr Stintz finally goes to Selvaggia. Though his single eye is the threatening moon in whose glare all horror occurs, Selvaggia goes with him, and thus, like most Hawkes victims, collaborates in her own violation. He wants the child, who has been protected from the slaughter of the Allied offensive, to witness her father's, Zizendorf's, murder of Leevey; then Stintz intends to inform. While this psychological rape is going on, the Duke corners Jutta's son in a wrecked movie theater, where Stella's son, who returned from the war with only one leg, lives with his wife; Stella's son is flattered by the Duke's visit. Before Zizendorf kills Leevey, Hawkes provides a long flashback to the day when the American Colonel and Leevey first came to the town to execute Miller, the pastor who had changed his views during the war. Stintz, out of a motiveless malice, and the Mayor, from fear of the Colonel, had co-operated: Zizendorf had been forced to join the firing squad and it was his bullet that killed the pastor. Miller fell into the frozen canal, where his body thawed and bloated in the fog. It is appropriate that Zizendorf should begin his insurrection by killing a Jew. But Hawkes makes of Leevey

merely a simple soldier who says, "Hi ya, Mac," and wishes he were back in the delicatessen. When Jutta's husband was reported missing in Siberia, Zizendorf took over both Jutta and the editorship; Hawkes connects Zizendorf with the husband by having Jutta, seconds before Zizendorf kills Leevey, reread a letter in which her husband tells of shooting a Russian leader from his horse. After Leevey strikes the log in the road, Hawkes shifts back to the morning of his death when, ironically, he had lain with a vicious German girl who infected him with disease. With the insurrection under way, Hawkes has Stella, the strong woman whom Zizendorf admires, recall the riot in the insane asylum, a riot that began among the monkeys kept for experiments and spread to the psychopaths. Under Stella's leadership, it was the women, bereft of men, who put down the riot. The continuation of this ironic juxtaposition climaxes the book: with the institution of a new government, the insane people who have been at large return to the madhouse. Society's pathological drives are pushed underground once more, while their manifestations are worked out in various guises of normality until the nightmare of history visits us again. Childhood fears, in Hawkes' prophetic vision, prove to refer to the childhood of the race which civilization never entirely outgrows.

When the riot began, Stella was strangling a mangy chicken under the gaze of Balamir, who had just escaped from the asylum. As the Duke hacks up the body of Jutta's son with a rusty sword cane as though the child were a fox, furious with himself for his lack of aristocratic finesse, Zizendorf tosses Leevey's body among countless other dead soldiers in the swamp; handbills inciting the people to rise up against the Allies are being printed in the chicken house behind Stella's place; Stella is nursing Balamir, who, ironically, is thinking of himself as the one who will free his people and rebuild the town; learning from Selvaggia

of Stintz's betrayal, Zizendorf bludgeons him with the old man's tuba, carts the body to the Mayor's house, sets fire to it, while the Mayor sleeps fitfully, as he has throughout the novel, afflicted with chronic nightmares of Miller. As Zizendorf goes to sleep with Jutta, Selvaggia, seeing the fire, stays awake with her fears. Stella accepts the Duke's invitation to dinner (she does not know that she will eat the body of her nephew whom she has rejected as having no resemblance to her aristocratic family); a few seconds later Zizendorf's handbill invites her to kill Americans. Thus, she becomes one of the cannibals of her reverie in 1914. Ironically, the Duke is driven to the extreme act of cannibalism at that very moment when Zizendorf has succeeded (or so he is convinced) in restoring order and well-being; nor does the Duke know that Zizendorf has made him Chancellor; other

"qualified" persons have been appointed to positions in the new government. Hawkes' irony asserts that Zizendorf's methods perpetuate and will ultimately reaffirm the kind of atrocity the Duke has committed, for the German (and in a sense all) national ego grows out of the carnage of its past wars. The piecemeal mutilation of Ernst in his bungling duels anticipate the butchering of Jutta's son; Ernst dies clutching one of the Christ figures carved by an old idiot in a shack near the mountain hotel. Men become Christs or cannibals.

The Cannibal is a short novel. It can be experienced in one sitting, just as one can suffer a nightmare in one sleeping. But just as the aura of some nightmares persists throughout the day, this is a nightmare from which the reader as cannibal is a long time waking.

THE CARETAKER

Type of work: Drama

Author: Harold Pinter (1930-)

Time: The present

Locale: A house in west London

First presented: 1960

Principal characters:

DAVIES, the proposed caretaker

ASTON, a tenant who lives in the room and takes care of Davies for a time

MICK, Aston's brother and owner of the house in which they have a room

The Caretaker is a dramatic study of the relations among three men in a cluttered, unkempt, crudely furnished room: Aston, the slow-witted tenant, a man in his early thirties; Mick, the landlord, who is Aston's younger brother; and Davies, an old tramp subsisting on the brothers' hospitality. At the beginning of the play, which takes place entirely within the confines of a single room, Aston has rescued Davies from a fight at a nearby café. Because the old man has been fired from his job at this establishment, Aston has brought him to the room. Charitably he gives Davies a chair, a bed, and a little

money, and offers him cigarettes, a pair of shoes, and a job as caretaker of the flat—an offer that is repeated by Mick. But Davies' persistent complaints about the arrangements made for him gradually antagonize the brothers, and at the end of the play, in a moment that is almost tragic in impact, Davies is driven out. The power of the play derives from the skill with which Pinter moves his characters toward the inevitability of this final expulsion.

Davies is established at the outset of the drama as a lonely derelict, at once pathetic and ludicrous. From the moment

that Aston ushers him into the room, the audience sees that he is utterly dependent on the kindness and generosity of his host. So simple a convenience as a chair to sit on gives Davies satisfaction, for this is a man deprived of common comforts, dispossessed of the amenities and securities that insulate the life of the average working man. During his job at the café, he says, he could never get a seat during the tea break. But Davies is less often grateful for small favors than dissatisfied with large ones. In spite of his position as a mendicant, he masquerades as a man to be reckoned with. He tells Aston, for example, that the fight at the café started because he refused to empty a bucket of rubbish because he thought the task beneath his position and he resented this affront to his dignity as an old man. He therefore challenged the Scotsman who had given him the order (as he later threatens the innocuous Aston with a knife), but actually he was capable only of saying what he *might* have done to his antagonist had he been younger, or what he *may* do later in revenge. His Falstaffian bravado collapsed in the face of imminent violence, from which Aston saved him just in time. In retrospect, he is forced to admit that the Scotsman could have put him in the hospital with a single punch.

The incident, even in the retelling, graphically reveals the central paradox in Davies' character: the conflict between his situation and his pretensions. He is a beggar with appalling arrogance, a petty, useless hobo who presumes to be a man of stature and importance. His presumption takes a number of forms. He is fanatically xenophobic, denouncing to Aston the numbers of Poles, Greeks, and Blacks who would crowd him out of a seat at the café; he accepts pipe tobacco only after explaining that he has been recently robbed of a tin of it; he declares that he has dined in the best company, that he abandoned his wife shortly after their marriage because of her slovenly housekeeping. He contends, too, that he

has a number of friends who help him, among them a lavatory attendant who gives him soap, and he repeatedly maintains that papers establishing his identity are available in Sidcup, where he intends to go as soon as the weather clears. But as the play proceeds, Davies' claims, his demands, and his cantankerous assertiveness gradually appear for what they are, the threadbare covering of a helpless old man, clutching desperately at the rags of a tattered self-respect. The story about his papers is patently spurious, and even his name is subject to question, for he has been living much of his life, he says, under the pseudonym of Jenkins. He pretends to be a connoisseur of shoes, preferring leather to suede and pointedly expressing his dissatisfaction with the fit of the footwear offered him by Aston, but he must confess that his own shoes are almost entirely worn out. He does not like his bed, which is situated directly under an open window and is consequently exposed in the night to rainy gusts, but he has no other place to sleep and must accept it.

In large part, of course, Davies' character is defined and elicited by the two other figures in the play. Each punctures the old man's noxious presumptuousness in a different way, Aston by his disarming modesty and Mick by his cool, cruelly penetrating tone of sustained mockery. Aston is deceptively mild in appearance and manner. He is thoughtful, quiet, patient, and generous to a fault, qualities which make him seem the perfect putty for Davies' rather heavy-handed manipulation. When Davies rejects the proffered shoes, Aston does not chide his guest for ingratitude; instead, he returns to the room, in the third act, with another pair of shoes. He opens not only his house and purse to Davies, but also his heart; in a long speech at the end of Act II, he unfolds the bleak horror of his past—of his early hallucinations, of the insidious rumor which sent him to a mental institution, of the electric shock treatment he received there, of his discharge, of his

present life as a kind of human vegetable. Aston, in fact, is clearly the sort of man who needs the compassion that a personal caretaker would give him, and he seems unconsciously to imply this fact when he offers Davies the job of caretaker; the meaning of the term vacillates between "house janitor" and "sympathetic guardian." Pinter exploits this ambiguity throughout the play. But the ambiguity is especially enriched by the circumstances in which the job offer is made. As a crude, demanding intruder, Davies is fitted to be a caretaker in neither sense. On the contrary, we see from the beginning that as a homeless, destitute old man, he himself requires a caretaker. In Aston, his kindly, unassuming, uncomplaining host, Davies thinks that he has found his man.

But Davies woefully underestimates Aston. The old man shortly discovers that his modest host is perfectly capable of self-assertion when the occasion demands. On the morning after their first night in the room together, Aston charges Davies with jabbering in his sleep, creating a disturbance that awoke Aston. The next morning, when Davies complains that rain and wind came in upon him through the open window as he slept, and he therefore demands that the window be closed, Aston insists that the window shall remain open. Still later, in Act III, Aston reacts sharply when Davies explodes over the treatment he has been getting. After accepting the second pair of shoes which Aston offers him, after churlishly objecting to the color of the laces, Davies goes to sleep. Once more his mutterings awaken Aston, who in turn arouses the old man. When Davies spews out a torrent of abuse at Aston's mental status and draws a knife on him, Aston quietly tells the old man that he smells and that he must leave. Davies can do nothing for the moment except leave. He goes off in a flurry of feckless imprecations.

But if Davies underestimates Aston, his judgment of Mick is doubly inept.

From his first encounter with Davies at the end of Act I, Mick is almost ruthlessly in command, supremely confident of his power to strip away every one of Davies' pretensions and to expose him for the selfish, useless parasite he is. Davies, significantly clad only in his underwear, is rummaging in a sideboard drawer when Mick enters the room, surprises him, forces him to the floor, and calmly launches on a cross-examination calculated to drive the old man mad. He taunts Davies by withholding his trousers, all the while questioning him about his name, his bed, his sleep of the night just passed, his reason for being in the room, and his intentions, all the time mockingly pretending that Davies might be a prospective tenant of limitless means. When Aston enters the room with a bag for Davies, Mick takes it and teases Davies with it before letting him have it. It is Mick, too, who restates Aston's offer of the caretaking job, but he defines the duties in flamboyantly elaborate terms. The man he wants, he tells Davies, must be a first-class interior decorator capable of transforming the rudely furnished room into a sumptuously appointed flat. Davies, of course, is compelled to admit that he has no such qualifications; this is only one of the many retractions and evasions to which Mick's merciless questioning drives him. The final blow comes in Act III when Davies turns to Mick for support against Aston, who has just asked Davies to leave. With that astounding presumption which has marked his conduct and attitude from the beginning, Davies expects to displace Aston in Mick's affection, in effect, to gain Mick as a caretaker. But it shortly becomes clear that Mick has no intention of evicting his own brother, for whom he has generously provided living quarters; instead, he tells Davies that Aston can do what he likes with the house. At this point Aston returns and firmly repeats his order that Davies must go. It is a tribute to Pinter's power as a playwright that Davies' plight here is almost tragic. He

has proved himself a thoroughly boorish, obnoxious, petulant, cranky, and ungrateful guest, but he somehow holds out sympathy in the final moments of the play. He is no longer ludicrous; he is now desperate and forlorn. The would-be caretaker must roam the world in search of care.

In the light of this ending, the play might be called a comedy-turned-tragedy. It has its moments of laughter, for Pinter has an uncanny gift for reproducing the banalities of ordinary conversation—its trudging pace, its cul-de-sacs, its involutions, its maddening regressions. His dialogue, therefore, is often amusing, as are the ludicrous claims, evasions, and self-deceptions of Davies. But like the climate

in so many of Pinter's plays, the atmosphere of *The Caretaker* is subtly, treacherously charged with potential menace. The characters who move about in the room are never directly exposed to the dangers of the outside world, but Davies must sleep with a gas stove above his head (the gas jets make him apprehensive), and with the wind and rain blowing in upon his head. He wants to close the window, to insulate himself from the world outside, but Aston will not let him; and it is into that world that Aston ultimately thrusts him. As the curtain falls on the final act, one is left with the spectacle of a lonely, desolate, dispossessed man, still talking of papers in Sidcup which do not exist.

CAT AND MOUSE

Type of work: Novel
 Author: Günter Grass (1927-)
 Time: World War II
 Locale: Danzig, Germany
 First published: 1963

Principal characters:

PILENZ, the narrator and an admirer of Mahlke
 JOACHIM MAHLKE, a frail boy with a large and active Adam's apple
 TULLA POKRIEFKE, a skinny girl
 FATHER GUSEWSKI, a practical-minded priest
 WALDEMAR KLOHSE, a severe school principal

The spiritual recovery of Germany has lagged far behind its economic recovery, and nowhere has this lag been more apparent than in the failure of German literature to regain the eminence it had attained before World War II in the work of Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, and Herman Hesse. All of these writers diagnosed the malady then festering in the German soul, a spiritual malaise to be seen in the horrors of the Nazi regime. That malady and its effects have been long in healing, but the recent emergence of several writers of the first rank suggests that the new Germany is finding its voice and being spiritually reborn. Perhaps the most notable among them, certainly the most heralded, is Günter Grass, whose

first novel, *The Tin Drum*, established him as a major figure in the postwar rehabilitation of German literature. In *Cat and Mouse*, his second novel, he reinforces his claim to that status by perceptively probing into what continues to ail the German spirit.

Though narrated in 1961 by an adult named Pilenz, who works as a secretary for a parish settlement house, *Cat and Mouse* is set in the years of World War II, when Pilenz was a teenager and schoolboy. Caught up in the dull round of secular life in a socialist state and poignantly aware of a great spiritual emptiness in his world (he is a Catholic who lost his belief in God in his youth), Pilenz feels compelled to tell the story of

his boyhood friend, Joachim Mahlke, who disappeared, after deserting the army, by diving into a sunken minesweeper where they played as boys and Mahlke had a secret retreat. Though fifteen years have elapsed since then and the time of writing, Pilenz has anxiously sought out Mahlke on every occasion and in every place where he could possibly appear; he has never given up hope that his friend will "resurface." Thus *Cat and Mouse* is dedicated, as it were, to resuscitating the spirit of Mahlke, to rediscovering a spiritual basis for German life and art.

The resuscitation, or the writing of the novel by Pilenz, is a complicated matter. Time has dimmed and confused his memory, so that his story is as much a reconstruction of the past as a recollection of it, as much the re-creation of Mahlke, and of that part of himself Mahlke represents, as memory. A self-conscious artist, Pilenz realizes that his story, written out of inner necessity, is like all art a fusion of reality and the imagination. What he remembers most vividly, providing him with a grip on the past and himself, is a boyhood scene in which he or one of his friends—he remembers it differently each time he returns to it—encouraged a black cat to pounce on Mahlke's mouse, that is, his Adam's apple, while he lay asleep. About this fable-like incident Pilenz constructs his tale of how the beast of death eventually kills Mahlke's mouse. Ultimately a novel about writing a novel, *Cat and Mouse* is a definition and revival of those spiritual qualities lost with Mahlke's disappearance, the dialogue of recollection being a way of making him reappear in the narrator and his public.

Endowed with an abnormally large and active Adam's apple and lacking in qualities of physical grace, Joachim Mahlke was an unnoticed figure among the children of the neighborhood until he learned to swim at the age of fourteen. Thereafter he was a moral force—in leading them in the swim to the sunken boat, in diving into dangerous depths and

staying beneath the surface for long periods while collecting trophies, and in being modest and considerate. He was not, however, nature's darling: besides being awkward in appearance and manner, he never tanned and the cold water chilled him blue and coarsened his skin. Furthermore, he had no interest in girls or in displays of virility. Rather, he was driven by self-consciousness to use the power he was blessed with to hide his Adam's apple, to redeem his natural being and shortcomings. For that purpose he devoted himself to self-transcending ideals, represented alternately by the Virgin Mother and military heroes. These provided him with religious idols before which he could kneel in purifying devotion.

Growing up audience-conscious, Mahlke originally wanted to be a clown so that he could make people laugh and help them be happy, but the Catholic Church, the German state through its heroes and schools, and the war sapped his faith and channeled his power toward destructive ends. Eventually, he who had been called the Redeemer by a classmate caricaturist, is refused recognition for his military exploits by the school that had taught him that heroes are made by slaughter in the name of the state, and is led to betray his initial religious and humanistic impulses by the pressure of social and political circumstances. Frustrated in his aspiration to reveal the truth to school children, he is left with nothing to believe in, with no honorable task to perform. His disappearance into the minesweeper comes as a final gesture of knowledge and repudiation, perhaps an awareness of his inability to hide his Adam's apple, certainly a recognition of the inability of his society to harbor his spiritual talents and aspirations or acknowledge their source. Thus his was the hero's dilemma: he was the victim of the contradictions between his inordinate desire to serve and the refusal of the common order to tolerate him and his idol.

The disappearance and absence of the

heroic, then, is what ails Germany in Günter Grass's diagnosis. But the traditional heroes are not those whose loss he laments, not the supermen of the Nibelungs championed by Nietzsche and Wagner. What Grass resuscitates, replacing them with the Virgin Mother, is the Christian-chivalric vision in which masculine power is bound in service to feminine tenderness, in which nature is tamed and saved from its inherent evil through devotion to purifying spiritual values, in which the magnetism of love replaces domination by tyrannical force.

Mahlke's ultimate defeat hinges on the triviality of a medal stolen from a war hero at school, a circumstance which seems at first glance a narrative weakness; but it is actually the novel's strength. Though it is in places reminiscent of Kafka's allegory and Mann's irony, conspicuously absent from *Cat and Mouse* are the demonic powers that haunted and doomed the characters in their works. Pilenz, though he cannot be sure he incited

the cat to pounce on Mahlke's mouse, knows he is implicated in his disappearance and so writes out of guilt, using art as a vehicle to redeem his sin. Recognition of what he has lost, of how far he has fallen, implies a spiritual awakening sufficient for the first steps toward freedom from necessity, the bondage of the past. Correspondingly, Grass's fable-like story, blending symbolism and irony with realism, expresses the power of the imagination to transform the "real," to forget enough of the past to entertain ideals again, to believe enough in its spiritual origins and power, as Mahlke did in the Virgin Mother, to make genuine art again possible.

Lyric and comic as well as tragic, the final import of the novel, then, is that the German spirit can face its past with history, avoid possession by its demons, and be aware of the spiritual power and transcendent values necessary for a truly new and healthy life.

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

Type of work: Drama

Author: Tennessee Williams (1914-)

Time: The present

Locale: The Mississippi Delta

First presented: 1955

Principal characters:

BIG DADDY, a wealthy Mississippi landowner of humble origins

BIG MAMA, his wife

GOOPER, a son sometimes called Brother Man

MAE, his wife, sometimes called Sister Woman

BRICK, another son, a dipsomaniac

MARGARET, his wife

On March 24, 1955, The Playwrights' Company presented Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* at the Morosco Theatre in New York. The play starred Barbara Bel Geddes as Margaret, the Cat; Ben Gazzara as her troubled husband Brick, and Burl Ives as Brick's Big Daddy. This presentation marked the tenth anniversary on Broadway of Tennessee Williams, who started his string of

theatrical successes in 1945 with *The Glass Menagerie*.

As Williams himself admitted in an article which appeared first in the drama section of *The New York Times* and then was reprinted as the preface to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, previously he had been preoccupied with emotions that tend to bind people ever more closely to a cell in solitary from which as prisoners they cry

out. Feeling that all of us live in solitary confinement, he believes that we can understand the emotions with which he has clothed his lonely characters. He endeavors to make his audiences feel not only that they understand his characters but also that they can identify themselves with the persons on the stage. Consequently, the subject matter of his plays lies not in the everyday surface aspects, but in those subjects people do not ordinarily talk about, the hidden, inner concerns of spiritual life or spiritual death. But in his plays Tennessee Williams' characters do talk about their problems to such an extent that there is a close rapport between characters and audience whether or not there seems to be a similar closeness between character and character.

Williams' control of his characters is such that, having presented them, they take care of the situations that arise. He seems never to manipulate them; these are no puppets pulled into position by strings. They are, instead, vastly troubled, earthy creatures who speak out their hearts.

The Mississippi Delta family presented in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is not a pretty one. Ruled over by Big Daddy, who emerged as a wealthy landowner after pulling himself up from the position of overseer, each member has gone his separate, lonely way until the time comes to celebrate Big Daddy's sixty-fifth birthday. One son, Gooper, has a brood of five, going on six. The other son, Brick, is a dipsomaniac whose wife Margaret is childless. Big Mama is a hearty, playful, and vacuous creature.

The plot, involving an attempt by Gooper to get possession of the plantation when Big Daddy dies, is as negligible as Gooper himself. Only three characters are the meat of this play. The people who matter are Big Daddy, Brick, and Margaret.

Each has been living a lonely life, but has put up a front to preserve the social amenities. While they cannot explain

themselves to one another, the explanation of their thoughts and feelings comes clearly across the footlights in language that is as bold as their thoughts.

Brick and Margaret have been living under a sort of truce since the death of Skipper, whom Margaret had accused of being in love with Brick. Brick accused Margaret of responsibility for distorting the friendship between himself and Skipper to such an extent that Skipper took to drink and succeeded in blotting himself out. Brick and Skipper had been such a successful pass combination in college football that they could not resist the attraction of a professional team. Margaret, by then married to Brick, felt that the boys refused to grow up to their adult responsibilities, but went along with them as an ardent rooter for their team. Before long they were a jealous triangle. After Skipper drank himself to death, Brick refused to sleep with Margaret and began to drown his own sorrows.

This much comes out in the first act, which is really an extended monologue by Margaret. She feels that the situation has become so intense that she is merely a cat trying to stay on a hot tin roof as long as possible. She intends to stay if she can because she loves Brick.

He is almost oblivious of her, though patient in an impersonal sort of way. Each day he drinks until he feels a click in his head that promises peace for a while. On this day, Big Daddy's birthday, he has not yet been able to drink enough to feel the click. The night before he had broken his ankle while trying in the dark to jump the hurdles on the high school athletic field, and so he has not attended the birthday dinner. The rest of the family intends to celebrate the cutting of the birthday cake in his room to have him join in the festivities. Impatient and inarticulate, Brick wants nothing to do with any of them, but Margaret persuades him to be as gentle as possible with Big Daddy, who does not know that the doctors, although assuring him that he suffers only from a spastic colon, have

really found him fatally ill with cancer.

The second act is again almost a monologue carried on by Big Daddy with Brick as the nearly silent objective, just as he was in the first act with Margaret. After the candles on the cake have been lighted, Big Daddy practically orders the rest of the family out of the room, as he is determined to uncover the reason for Brick's drinking. In an intense scene Big Daddy pierces through Brick's protective armor by showing that he has had to develop a tolerance for people in spite of their habitual lying and by admitting that he has endured the company of Big Mama and Gooper, although he has hated them for years. It is with love that he reaches through to Brick. When Brick finally explains his reason for drinking, Big Daddy finds it incomplete until Brick remembers that the last time he had talked to Skipper he had hung up on a telephone call during which Skipper had tried to make a drunken confession. Pointing out that Brick was disgusted with himself for failing to face the truth of the situation, Big Daddy feels that he has found the reason he looked for. But Brick, emotionally involved as he is, faces one truth with another and tells his father that the doctors have lied to him. There is only one satisfaction for both men; neither has ever lied to the other, though they have lived among liars all their lives.

When Tennessee Williams gave this play to Elia Kazan to read, Kazan, who was to direct the play, objected to the third act on three counts. He thought Big Daddy too vivid to be kept off stage after the second act. He wanted Brick to show some effect of his father's loving insight in the second act. And he wanted Margaret to appear more sympathetic to the audience as the play ended. Williams de-

bated the first suggestion; a return of Big Daddy could only be an anticlimax after the second act. He thought Brick's paralysis of spirit could not undergo a change so soon after even so revealing a diagnosis. But he was willing to make Maggie the Cat as charming to the audience as she had become to him. In the published play, therefore, the reader has a choice of two third acts; the original as Williams wrote it, and the version used in the Broadway production.

The third act is involved with Gooper's telling Big Mama that her husband really has cancer and suggesting a plan of trusteeship for the plantation after Big Daddy dies. Big Mama will have none of Gooper's plan. Instead, she turns to Big Daddy's favorite, Brick, and suggests that Big Daddy would like best to leave the place to Brick's son if he had one. Aroused by the noise of a family argument inside and a thunderstorm outside the house, Big Daddy comes back. Margaret, telling him she has kept his big birthday present until last, announces that she is carrying Brick's baby. As Big Daddy goes out happily to look over his land, Gooper and his wife pounce on Margaret and declare that she is lying. Brick defies them both. As the play ends, he feels the click of peacefulness and prepares to make Margaret's lie come true.

As is usual with Tennessee Williams' plays, there were mixed reactions among the reviewers following its dramatic presentation. Some found it deep in theme and insight; some found it enjoyable; some thought Williams had evaded the main issue; some thought it had tremendous dramatic impact. All agreed that it had an important place in the Williams canon.

CATCH-22

Type of work: Novel
Author: Joseph Heller (1923-)
Time: 1944

Locale: Pianosa, a mythical island eight miles south of Elba, and Rome
First published: 1961

Principal characters:

CAPTAIN JOHN YOSSARIAN, a United States Air Force bombardier who makes a separate peace
COLONEL CATHCART, the group commander
MAJOR MAJOR MAJOR, promoted by an I.B.M. machine, the 256th Squadron commander
MAJOR ——— DE COVERLEY, the squadron executive officer whose first name nobody knows because no one has ever dared ask him
LIEUTENANT MILO MINDBINDER, the mess officer, who turns black marketing into Big Business
CAPTAIN BLACK, the squadron intelligence officer
CHIEF WHITE HALFBOAT, an Indian from Oklahoma, the assistant intelligence officer
DOC DANEEKA, the flight surgeon
CAPTAIN R. O. SHIPMAN, the chaplain
NURSE SUE ANN DUCKETT
CLEVINGER,
ORR,
HAVERMEYER,
KID SAMPSON,
McWATT,
AARDVAARK (AARFY),
HUNGRY JOE,
DOBBS, and
NATELY, pilots, bombardiers, and navigators of the 256th Squadron
NATELY'S WHORE, who tries to kill Yossarian
GENERAL DREEDLE, the wing commander
GENERAL PECKEM, commanding Special Services
EX-PFC WINTERGREEN, a gold-bricker who controls 27th Air Force Headquarters because he sorts, and unofficially censors, all the mail

In 1961 the publication of *Catch-22* became an occasion for some rather free-wheeling critical acclaim. Many reviewers called it the best novel out of World War II, and at least one proclaimed it the best American novel out of anywhere in years. "Comic," "horrifying," "Rabelaisian," "exhilarating," "devastating," "rowdy," "cruelly sane," "compellingly moving"—these were among the epithets used to describe Joseph Heller's rambunctious first novel. In short, the book got off the ground with all the speed and thrust of jet propulsion.

Some of this acclaim was probably a tribute to the author's daring and prodigality. At a time when most of our young writers appeared so much obsessed by the idea of the well-made novel that their books tended to resemble carefully composed mood studies or tone poems, Joseph

Heller broke all the rules. But energy and imagination such as he displayed are determinants rather than coordinates in fiction. The simple truth is that *Catch-22* is somewhat less and something more than the conventional novel. As a novel it is turgid, loose-jointed, and always threatening to break out at the seams. As a piece of writing, however, it is an altogether remarkable performance. Ferociously and bawdily funny in part, banal in spots, fantastically gruesome at times, it achieves a lunatic identity and wild inner logic of its own. The book is what one might expect in a collaboration between Kafka and Crazy Kat, to which have been added dialogue passages by a Hemingwayesque master of speech patterns, some scatological scenes suggested by Henry Miller, hallucinated nonsense out of Lewis Carroll, and some chunks of

the most undisciplined writing since Thomas Wolfe. It is not, as some have suggested, Mauldin's cartoons in prose or an American version of *The Good Soldier: Schweik*. It is a collage of wartime violence, sex, military snafu, black market dealing, hymns of hate, and guffaws of gutty humor.

The scenes shuttle back and forth between Pianosa, an imaginary Italian island where an Air Force bombing group is sweating out the closing months of World War II, and Rome where the flyers go on leave to stage latter-day Roman orgies in that city of prostitutes. Men who behaved like madmen, as Heller notes, were awarded medals. In a world of madmen at war the maddest—or the sanest—of all is Captain John Yossarian, a bombardier of the 256th Squadron. Having decided that death in war is a matter of circumstance and having no wish to be victimized by any kind of circumstance, he tries by every means he can think of—malingerer, defiance, cowardice, irrational behavior—to get out of the war. That was his resolve after the disastrous raid over Avignon, when Snowden, the radio-gunner, was shot almost in two, splashing his blood and entrails over Yossarian's uniform and teaching the bombardier the cold, simple fact of man's mortality. For some time after that Yossarian refused to wear any clothes, and when General Dreedle, the wing commander, arrived to award the bombardier a Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroism, military procedure was upset because Yossarian wore no uniform on which to pin the medal. Yossarian's logic of non-participation is so simple that everyone thinks him crazy, especially when he insists that "they" are trying to murder him. His insistence gets him into an argument with Clevinger, who is bright and always has an excuse or an explanation for everything. When Clevinger wants to know who Yossarian thinks is trying to murder him, the bombardier says that everyone of "them" is trying. Clevinger says he has no idea who "they"

can be. Yossarian then asks how he knows that "they" are not. Clevinger merely sputters.

Yossarian goes off to the hospital complaining of a pain in his liver. If he has jaundice, the doctors will discharge him; if not, they will send him back to duty. Yossarian spends some of his time censoring the enlisted men's letters. To some he signs Washington Irving's name as censor. On others he crosses out the letter but adds loving messages signed by the chaplain's name. The hospital would have been a good place to stay in for the rest of the war if it had not been for a talkative Texan and a patient so cased in bandages that Yossarian wondered at times whether there was a real body inside. When he returns to his squadron he learns that Colonel Cathcart, the group commander, has raised the number of required missions to fifty. Meanwhile Clevinger had dipped his plane into a cloud one day and never brought it out again. He and his plane simply vanished, and now he is not around the officers' club any longer to explain what had happened that time.

It is impossible for Yossarian to complete his tour of combat duty because, first, Colonel Cathcart wants to get his picture in *The Saturday Evening Post* and, second, to become a general. Consequently he continues to increase for his outfit the number of required missions above those required by 27th Air Force Headquarters. By the time he has set the number at eighty, Kraft, McWatt, Kid Sampson, and Nately are dead, Clevinger and Orr have disappeared, the chaplain has been disgraced (the C.I.D. accuses him of the Washington Irving forgeries), Aarfy has committed a brutal murder, Hungry Joe screams in his sleep night after night, and Yossarian is still looking for new ways to stay alive. It is also impossible for him to be sent home on medical relief because of Catch-22. As Doc Daneeka, the medical officer, explains, he can ground anyone who is crazy, but anyone who wants to avoid combat duty

is not crazy; so he cannot be grounded. This is *Catch-22*, the inevitable loophole in the scheme of justice, the self-justification of authority, the irony of eternal circumstance. *Catch-22* explains Colonel Cathcart, who continues to raise the number of missions and volunteers his men for every dangerous operation in the Mediterranean theater. He also plans to have prayers during every briefing session but gives up that idea when he learns that officers and enlisted men must pray to the same god. It explains the struggle for power between General Dreedle, who wants a fighting outfit, and General Peckem of Special Services, who wants to see tighter bombing patterns—they look better in aerial photographs—and issues a directive ordering all tents in the Mediterranean theater to be pitched with their fronts facing toward the Washington Monument. It explains Captain Black, the intelligence officer who compels the officers to sign a new loyalty oath each time they get their map cases, flak suits and parachutes, pay checks, haircuts, and meals in the mess. It explains, above all, Lieutenant Milo Mindbinder, the mess officer, who parlays petty black market operations into an international syndicate in which every man, as he says, has a share. By the time he has his organization on a paying basis he has been elected mayor of half a dozen Italian cities, Vice-Shah of Oran, Caliph of Baghdad, Imam of Damascus, and Sheik of Araby. Once he almost makes a mistake by cornering the market on Egyptian cotton, but after some judicious bribery he unloads it on the United States government. The climax of his career comes when he rents his fleet of private planes to the Germans and from the Pianosa control tower directs the bombing and strafing of his own outfit. Men of public decency were outraged until Milo opened his books for public inspection and showed the profit he had made. Then everything is all right, for in the writer's strange, mad world patriotism and profit are indistinguishable; the world lives by Milo's

motto, the claim that whatever is good for the syndicate is good for the nation.

Eventually Yossarian takes off for neutral Sweden, three jumps ahead of the authorities and less than one jump ahead of Nately's whore, who for some reason or other blames him for her lover's death and tries to kill him, but not before he has spent a night wandering alone through wartime Rome. This portion of the book is appalling in its picture of greed, lust, and brutality. *Catch-22* is a work reaffirming the ancient ties of cruelty and humor in its vision of everything vicious and absurd in our muddled society. Joseph Heller seems to say that in this world men of good will must either escape or perish, that if this world is sane, then madness alone makes sense. Without being profound, his novel is a work repudiating the world's values and society's behavior.

Despite its obvious flaws, *Catch-22* is brilliant, devastating, apocalyptic, and since its publication it has become a pivotal work in our contemporary literature of the absurd sometimes, and somewhat inaptly, called black humor or bitter comedy. It is not, as in the case of novels out of World War I, a story of initiation. In theme, fable, and mood it deals with the simple, grim realities of survival in a world with all values reversed by the violence of war. As such, it is an assault, made in hilarious prose, on the mechanical, institutionalized, homogenized, anesthetized society we live in today. Black humor has as the objects of its guffawing satire the clichés of thought, feeling, and action that color almost every aspect of modern life, from stereotypes of love, home, religion, and death to the Bomb. If Heller's novel has an underlying purpose, it is to be found in the writer's apparent belief that a comic vision of experience and a sense of the outrageously absurd in human affairs provide the only possible stance for the rational man in a world in which the dividing line between graspable reality and wild fantasy has all but disappeared.

CEREMONY IN LONE TREE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Wright Morris (1910-)

Time: One day in March, 1957

Locale: Acapulco, Mexico; Lincoln, Nebraska; Lone Tree, Nebraska

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

GORDON BOYD, a middle-aged writer

DAUGHTER, his girl friend

WALTER MCKEE, Boyd's boyhood friend, a cattle raiser

GORDON MCKEE, Walter's little grandson

LOIS MCKEE, Walter's wife, once in love with Boyd

TOM SCANLON, Lois' father, ninety years old

CALVIN MCKEE, Scanlon's great-grandson

ETOILE MOMEYER, Calvin's cousin

MAXINE MOMEYER, Lois' sister

BUD MOMEYER, Maxine's husband, a mailman

LEE ROY MOMEYER, Bud's nephew

CHARLES MUNGER, a pathological killer

JENNINGS, a writer of pulp Westerns

In his first nine novels, Wright Morris processed fragments of a vision that focused on the American Land, Character, and Dream. In *The Field of Vision*, the first novel of a trilogy, these fragments began to cohere. *Ceremony in Lone Tree* is the second novel in the trilogy.

Morris' usual method has three phases: he describes the scene; next he conducts a roundup of the characters; then he depicts a kind of ceremony that serves to set up significant relationships and to evoke transient moments of self-knowledge which cause a faint transformation in the characters.

Through a flawed pane of glass in the hotel lobby, old Tom Scanlon gazes upon Lone Tree, Nebraska, a ghost town; his view is to the west over the arid plains; but to the east, the prairie town of Polk prospers. Morris describes "The Scene" in such a way as to suggest his themes and to convey an impression of the spiritual desolation of his characters. The ancestors of the old Western pioneers have now turned eastward again. Having no perspective on the present, Scanlon's point of view is restricted to the wasteland; for the rest of the novel, Morris pushes the old man into the background;

during "The Ceremony" he sleeps on a cot behind the stove.

In *Ceremony in Lone Tree*, Morris exhibits most impressively his talent for creating people who illustrate aspects of the American character; if they appear grotesque, they may prove to be similar to the folks next door. In "The Roundup," Morris presents each character in a separate section of his own. Boyd, a self-exiled Nebraska writer, approaches the homeplace from Acapulco, where he has been trying to forget an encounter with his childhood friends, Walter and Lois McKee, at a bullfight in Mexico City. When McKee impulsively invites him to a reunion in honor of Tom Scanlon's ninetieth birthday, Boyd is drawn by perverse nostalgia. To shock the folks back home, he takes with him a woman whom he calls Daughter; audacious, youthful spirit of the present, she sustains him during his journey into the past. Next come the viewpoints of McKee and Lois, who approach Lone Tree from the modern city of Lincoln, Nebraska. McKee has lived his empty life vicariously through Boyd, hoping the hero will fill it with meaning. Lois, the opposite of Daughter, epitomizes the suppression of emotions

that make everyone tense and nervous. Characters not presented in *The Field of Vision* appear next. Maxine Momeyer has a difficult life; her daughter, Etoile, is sexually precocious, and her husband, Bud, has never grown up; when he goes off duty as a mailman, he collects bounty on stray cats by shooting them with a bow and arrow. Etoile is in love with her stuttering cousin Calvin, who rejects people in favor of horses. Events in the present occur within the frame of a recent incident that shocked the world: the slaughter of ten people by Charles Munger of Lincoln, while his friend, Lee Roy, Bud's nephew, killed two bullies with his hotrod. Jennings, who writes pulp Westerns, is so intrigued by the mystery of life that he has no life of his own. Boyd wonders whether he is drawn to these people because they are so hopeless or so full of hope.

Because there are nine viewpoints, with twenty-eight shifts, unity could have become a problem for Morris, but it is maintained by a controlling conception, by various patterns of relationship among the characters, and by a consistency of style among the viewpoints—a sophisticated manipulation of the clichés of everyday speech, as filtered through the third person. The tone is comic, but Morris' mingling of the bizarre and the humorous creates a strange atmosphere in which the comedy frightens as it amuses. In the absence of an overt pattern of novelistic action, the relationships among the characters generate suspense and excitement by the controlled development of their many twists and turns, nuances, suppressions, and flare-ups. To common situations, past and present, the characters' differing responses are always active, creating an impressive sense of motion. In ways representative of Morris, character, theme, and motif evolve organically as the novel moves to its climax.

Like a ghost town movie set, the Lone Tree Hotel inspires the enactment of an outdated drama, the *personae* of which are Buffalo Bill, Billy the Kid, Santa

Claus, Charles Lindbergh, Robin Hood, and Davy Crockett; shifting from one to another, most of the men play roles whose styles were shaped in the American past; less inclined to play roles, the women lament the failure of the men to make something real happen in the present. Nothing is what it seems because the characters are disposed to see anything suggested to them; what is there (fact) is no more vivid than what the mind can project (fiction). In the rhetoric of magic, the effect is that of "now you see it, now you don't." Just as Bud's attic and basement are full of the junk he collects from people on his mail route, each character is a repository of cast-off lives; though Lee Roy can make one smoothly running car out of many wrecked ones, a human may break down if he is a composite of other people with no strong self-nucleus. Boyd is like a carnival barker, talking about freaks who try, in an exaggerated way, to be what they are not.

Trains, cars, bombs, and guns are other outward, material symbols of the American experience and of the personalities of the characters. The plains are like the sea, and everything seems to move like ships over a metaphysical landscape. Experience has blended, and blurred, fact and fiction, nourishing illusions that aggravate the problem of identity. In *Lone Tree*, where moonlight illuminates the romance and the nostalgia of the past and real events have an aura of the imaginary, the characters behave as though they are in a motion picture and thus free of responsibility, but they experience disillusionment and nausea in the present. In the foreground Morris presents a parody of American popular culture, but in the background hovers the image of the atomic bomb; near the end, past fiction and present fact collide in the lives of the characters and either wake them or lull them to sleep.

To Morris, the suppression of emotion is a trait in the American character; emotion is released vicariously in unconscious parodies of violence. By suddenly ex-

pressing their suppressed emotions, Lee Roy and Charles Munger exemplify themes that relate less drastically to the other characters. Though the spirit of the times helped make them what they are, their audacity differs from Boyd's and their violence contrasts with that of the old frontier. In Munger, Morris shows an exaggeration of the nightmare side of the American dream of success: the boy shoots everybody he encounters in order to be somebody. Fear of themselves and of each other, of Munger and his kind, and of atomic annihilation keep the characters tense, but responsive to the unexpected.

In quiet, "normal," even prudish people, Morris suggests, there is an inherent wildness. Giving in to impulse by word or act, each character has a moment of truth, audacity, love, or imagination in which he tastes wildness and freedom. Smothered in Maxine, sexuality breathes deeply in Etoile. Boyd's presence stimulates each character to reveal himself. The reader follows a spontaneous ceremony in which characters rid themselves of the inessentials of the past, improvising upon new personalities. Before the explosion of the bomb (made up of the convergence of lines of tension among the characters), Boyd clowns and indulges in an outburst against the concealment of true feelings. But he is made speechless by the behavior of his old witnesses. Ironically, only Boyd and Scanlon, heroes of the past, fail to act audaciously.

The confrontation of the present with the past is dramatized in the most highly charged of the concentrated moments of which the novel is composed. When Etoile and Calvin roar into the ghost town in a wagon, a dead show dog in back, shot by Bud with his bow and arrow, Boyd's audacity finally affects Lois; she fires her grandfather's Colt .45 as an impulsive act that rouses her from emotional stultification and sets off a beneficial chain reaction among the other characters. Symbolically, she kills her father and the mythic past represented by his

father's pistol. Now the past has come full cycle. Scanlon's birthday is his death day, but it also the birth of the present for the others. In the wagon in which he was born, old Scanlon is taken to be buried. But Morris does not allow this sensational event to jar the primary focus, which is on character consciousness; he goes back to points before the incident and presents it over again through several other points of view.

Ceremony in Lone Tree is a continuation of Morris' exploration of the male-female conflict. Having waited long enough for the men to break up the routine and monotony of their lives, the women act. From a ceremony of death, they try to salvage something for the living. In control, the women will build on the ruins created by the sleeping males.

The relationship between a hero and his witnesses, developed in most of Morris' previous novels, ends in *Ceremony in Lone Tree*. Boyd has always tried, like America, to be more than he is, prompted by his witnesses who have always hoped for something to live by. But between the promise of the amateur and the performance of the master something more than audacity is demanded. Boyd once attempted to walk on water; later he wrote a book about the incident. But in his audacity there is no longer an element of spontaneity and surprise, for after Boyd squirts a bull with pop in Mexico, McKee can anticipate the hero's antics. At the end, Boyd, trapped in his own childhood (in a sense he never left the plains), is asleep at the feet of Scanlon, dead embodiment of the heroic past, while McKee, the disenchanted witness, holds the reins; as they move over a landscape that was once arid plains, McKee gazes over the green wheat of the present, which promises a future unbeguiled by men like Boyd. The present eludes the hero; only the past has pattern. From childhood, he has, as Lois knows, put the later appreciation before the immediacy of the moment. If the kiss Boyd gave her on the porch thrilled Lois, it was the au-

dacity of his own act that charmed Boyd. Lois senses that Boyd's audacity was camouflage, that he was as much afraid of her as McKee was. She sees that Boyd, McKee, and her father have not grown up. Like America itself, they are still adolescent. Hero Boyd and witness McKee begin to merge, but it is not clear whether the virtues and the faults of the two roles will make an effective blend. Having discovered that it gives off no charge in the present, Boyd is free of the past, but he has as yet no indication of a future.

In the behavior of his characters, Morris depicts a conflict between the American past and present; the future is both promising and ominous. His purpose is to free his characters from the past. Concerned almost entirely with immediate or recent happenings, many seem unaware of their captivity in the distant past. Present and past coexist: a fossil himself, Scanlon recalls the exploration of the Western frontier, while overhead a jet crosses the face of the moon. The past is dead and the present is dying because

America has failed to realize its promise and now lives in fear of fallout.

The real reason for the reunion is to get Calvin and Etoile together. On the landscape where things began and are now coming to an end, perhaps something can begin for the young lovers. Calvin is trapped in Scanlon's past (which is purely imaginary, for he has confused his father's past with his own uneventful one). But Etoile lives in her own present, eager to precipitate the future. The new generation transforms the past with new forms of audacity. Etoile is Lois' opposite; with Boyd-like audacity, she frees Calvin from the sexual restraint that has prevailed in the past; because the female seizes the day, Calvin experiences with Etoile what Boyd failed to experience with Lois. In the end, when the past and the present confront each other and explode, it is not clear who gains or loses, but the implication is that the ground is cleared, even though none of the younger generation seems promising material out of which to process a meaningful future.

CHICAGO POEMS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

First published: 1916

The publication of *Chicago Poems* created a furore usually characteristic of the introduction of material that is new both in subject matter and in style. The subject matter frightened and infuriated the conservatives, who insisted that Sandburg's topics were vulgar, indecent, and scarcely poetic. The poetry itself could not be scanned in the conventional way, was "free verse" virtually to the point of chaos, and could not in any sense be called poetically beautiful. Liberal critics and readers, however, such as Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* who had "discovered" Sandburg as she had also "discovered" Vachel Lindsay, was convinced that

Sandburg might be the great democratic poet called for by Walt Whitman and that his style of writing, his Whitmanesque barbaric yawp, was not only his own particular voice in poetry but also exactly the correction that conventional poetry needed to revitalize it.

But even Harriet Monroe's first reaction to Sandburg's totally new kind of writing had been unsympathetic at the beginning, so different was Sandburg from even the unconventional poets of the day. When Sandburg first submitted "Chicago," the title piece in the later volume, and eight other poems to Miss Monroe for publication in *Poetry*, her first reaction had been one of shock. But

as she read on, shock turned to admiration. She published the poems and subsequently championed the author, defending him against the criticism leveled against him after the appearance of *Chicago Poems*.

The some one hundred and fifty poems in the volume, although of the same style and content, differ rather sharply in quality. At their best they are powerful, harsh when covering harsh subjects, but astonishingly gentle when discussing gentle subjects. At their worst they are chopped-up prose, sometimes duller than spoken language.

In the title poem, "Chicago," Sandburg looks at the boisterous capital of the Middle West, and with great love and admiration catalogues her glories as well as her degradation; or rather, in recognizing her weaknesses and seeing through and beyond them, he arrives at her greatness: the muscular vitality, the momentum, the real life that he loves. He showed Chicago as the capital of the meat-packing industry, the great manufacturer of the Midwest, the crossroads of rail lines. All of these are her glory. But he saw her also as the city of wicked people, of crooks and gunmen, of prostitutes. She is fierce, but she is a city of builders, proud of being sweaty, bareheaded, of destroying and rebuilding. She, like the poet who sings her praises, is proud of being all these things.

The volume continues in this vein. Sandburg sees the city from the scaly underbelly, the tenderloin, looking at it through the eyes of the men and women on the streets, the lost, the underprivileged, the exploited, the lonely, the hated. In these poems he is, as he was called, the "mystical mobocrat." So comprehensive is his view that to read all the poems is to cover the whole seamy side of city life. Sandburg's feeling about these people and the conditions of their lives is not, however, one of despair. Though he sees the terror of poverty and underprivilege, he believes in the happiness, the present and the future of these individ-

uals. His treatment of them is optimistic and romantic.

"The Shovel Man" is a good example of this two-sided view of the same man. The laborer, as the poet sees him, is merely a person working with a shovel, a "dago," who works for very little money each day. But this man's lot is not discouraging, does not fill him with despair. For to an Italian woman back in Tuscany, he is a much greater success than one could imagine.

Another successful man, glad to be alive and doing what he does for a living, is the "Fish Crier," a Jew down on Maxwell Street, who with his sharp voice daily cries out his herring to hoped-for customers. Far from unhappy, he is delighted that God created the world as great as it is.

This theme is continued in the poem "Happiness." Sometimes there is a close approach to the mawkish and sentimental in Sandburg's sensibility. The democratic impulse has carried him out of the realm of observation and common sense and into that of romanticized fantasy. In this poem Sandburg says he has asked professors and successful executives for the meaning of life, and they could not answer him, looking at him indeed as though they felt he had meant to fool them. Then one Sunday afternoon he observed a group of Hungarians, with their beer and music, answering his philosophic question by unconsciously enjoying life merely by living it.

At times Sandburg quietly, in an undertone, states with telling effect the paradoxes and contradictions that exist in such a thriving city as Chicago, the city of the rich and the poor, the successful and the failures, the working and the workless. In "Muckers," for example, he writes that twenty men are watching a group of men dig a ditch in preparation for new gas mains. Among the twenty are two distinctly different reactions. Ten men see the work as the sorriest drudgery, while the other ten wish desperately that they had the job.

The contrast in the ways of life in Chicago is furthered in "Child of the Romans." In this poem an Italian eats his noon meal of bread, bologna, and water beside the railroad track he is repairing. The poverty of his meal is spotlighted by the train that passes on the tracks he is repairing so that the ride on the crack train will be so smooth that nothing will disturb the wealthy passengers and their splendid living.

Another aspect of Chicago life, the lure of the city for the country girl, is brought out in the poem named simply "Mamie." The namesake of the poem comes from a small Indiana town, where she was bored with the nothingness of life and ached for the romance of the big city. Once in Chicago, however, working in a basement store, she continues to dream of another bigger and more romantic city where her dreams can be realized.

"Fellow Citizen" is another study of true happiness, in which Sandburg barks his belligerent democracy. The poet says he has associated with the best people in the best of clubs, with millionaires and mayors. But the happiest man he knows is one who manufactures guitars and accordions. This man is happy because, in contrast with the rich and the powerful, he is not a money-grubber. He manufactures his accordions and guitars because he loves to, and he is so indifferent to money that he will scarcely mention price to someone who wants to buy his instruments. This man, says the poet, is the only person in Chicago for whom he ever held any jealousy.

There are other moods and other themes in this volume. Sandburg was familiar with the Imagist poets, their desire for simplicity and clarity, and although he disclaimed any influence from them, he did admit having been influenced by the Japanese poetry he had read. The section of his volume titled "Fogs and Fires" reveals characteristics of both types of verse.

"Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard" is

a gentle, hushed picture of a static moment of nature. Another quiet understatement is "Monotone." Here the author is concerned with beauty and with what is beautiful. The monotone of the rain has this quality, as does the sun on the hills. Most beautiful of all, however, is a face that the poet knows, for it contains the aspects of beauty caught in all other bits of nature.

Perhaps one of the most deservedly popular of Sandburg's brief nature images is the six-line poem called simply "Fog." Here with compelling gentleness the noise and violence of blustery Chicago is diminished to a single image in which fog steals catlike up to the city, looks over it for a moment and then moves on.

Other themes are evident in the volume. One, the weakness of words in conveying strong emotion, is revealed in "Onion Days," a poem concerning the Italian family Giovannitti caught in the iron grip of an exploiting millionaire named Jasper. Though they are wracked by economic necessity, there is a dignity about the Giovannittis, a simple goodness that, says Sandburg, no novelist or playwright could adequately express.

Another theme is the transitoriness of life, the ultimate disappearance of all. "Gone" tells the story of Chick Lorimer, a "wild girl" whom everybody loved, but who finally disappeared. Nobody has even the vaguest idea where she went.

"Murmurings in a Field Hospital," in the "War Poems" tells of a soldier longing for what is past: a singing woman in the garden, an old man telling stories to children, and his own past. This theme of the stupidity and uselessness of war constitutes many of Sandburg's powerful statements.

Early readers found *Chicago Poems* a work of tremendous impact; its voice was that of people talking and protesting in a manner never before attempted; its smell was of sweat, of the stockyards. Though Sandburg's real status in the history of

poetry has not yet been established, there can be no doubt that this volume was a

powerful influence on the poetic revival during and after World War I.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

Type of work: Poem

Author: George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)

First published: Cantos I and II, 1812; Canto III, 1816; Canto IV, 1818

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is the poem which brought instant fame and notoriety to its author. In Byron's often quoted phrase: "I awoke one morning and found myself famous." The reasons why the virtually unknown poet should suddenly take the world by storm with this poem are obvious. It is a travel poem written at a time when the English were eager for travel literature. It is about places of interest to the English, especially Portugal and Spain. Further, the poem is sinewed and enriched by the character of the traveler, the Byronic hero who is dark and melancholy, haughty, diffident, jaded, introspective, wicked, and successful.

The first two Cantos were begun in 1809, when Byron was actually traveling through the countries described: Portugal, Spain, the Mediterranean, Constantinople, Albania, Asia Minor, Troas, and Greece. The term "Childe" for the designation of the hero, Byron says in the preface to the first two cantos, was used in accordance with the old structure of versification; it is used in the medieval sense of a young noble who is waiting to be knighted. The poem, a so-called Romance, that is, a romance or narrative of adventure, runs to 156 Spenserian stanzas. This particular stanzaic form was chosen, Byron said, because, traditionally, it admits of all kinds of variation.

The first two Cantos cover the author's journey through Portugal, Spain, the Ionian Isles, Albania, and Greece. In the Preface Byron insists that the poem is not autobiographical and that "Childe Harold" should not be misinterpreted as a person for the writer. He kept up this

pretense through the publication of the third Canto, but in the fourth Canto Byron dropped his pretense and spoke out in his own person. That the poem was autobiographical from the first is demonstrated by the fact that in the manuscript version of Cantos I and II Byron called his hero "Childe Burun," which was the early form of his own name.

The first two Cantos are well directed and tightly controlled. The general tone of the poem and the stance of the Byronic hero is set at the very beginning. In an "Addition to the Preface" Byron apologizes for his hero by saying that he is in effect no worse than the knights of old, Sir Tristram and Sir Lancelot, for example, who surely were no better than they should have been. Therefore his hero is not to be censured for his character. This character is sketched in, beginning with the second stanza. Byron begins by saying that this Childe once lived in Albion's isle and did not take delight in virtue, but passed his days in dissipation, especially at night, and delighted in evil company and loose women. He sinned widely without atonement, and therefore fortunate was the virtuous girl who escaped his wicked influence.

Then, sick at heart, jaded by his wasting ways, Harold sails from England and his father's house, where, although he had reveled with many acquaintances, he had not been loved by any of them. His anti-feminist pose is reiterated, for the women he had enjoyed were dissolute and vain. Therefore, revolting from this dissolute life, or tired of it, Harold, that is, Byron, departs without remorse to visit other lands.

And now Childe Harold was sore
 sick at heart,
 And from his fellow bacchanals
 would flee;
 'Tis said, at times the sullen tear
 would start,
 But Pride congealed the drop within
 his ee:
 Apart he stalked in joyless reverie,
 And from his native land resolved
 to go,
 And visit scorching climes beyond
 the sea;
 With pleasure drugged, he almost
 longed for woe,
 And e'en for change of scene would
 seek the shades below.

His first stop is Portugal, a lovely land to him. Almost immediately his travels have a therapeutic effect. His melancholy pose is kept up by constant restatement of his troubles and his need for a cure. As he gazes on beautiful Portugal, he broods on his misspent youth and realizes that there is more to life than the ease of his early years.

In addition to the pose of the Byron hero that permeates the poem, there is another strain that constantly energizes it: Byron's real zeal for liberty. Throughout his life he had a genuine dedication to the freedom of both individuals and nations. In his own words: "There are but two sentiments to which I am constant—a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant." This strong love of liberty is immediately manifest in Spain, the second land Childe Harold visits, a romantic land teeming with songs, pregnant with glorious tale. Harold addresses himself to the proud Spain of yesteryear and to the liberty she then enjoyed.

From Spain he travels to Greece and Albania. A considerable amount of interest is maintained in these later sections by Byron's stirring up of classical memories. Here, for example, he sails past the spot where "sad Penelope" waited for the return of her husband, Ulysses, and where "dark Sappho" wrote. In writing of Greece, he addresses himself further to liberty. His feeling for the freedom of

Greece was so genuine and so intense that he finally gave up literature for revolution. At his own expense he organized an expedition to help free the Greeks from the Turks, and in the town of Missolonghi, after an excellent display of military skill and leadership, he grew sick of fever and died just after his thirty-sixth birthday. Byron is at the present time revered as a national hero by the Greeks.

Canto III is generally felt to be superior to the other three. It begins with an affirmation of the Byronic pose. The hero is driven by fate to continue his travels. He is a weed washed by the seas of life whenever the waves of the ocean roll. He is the "wandering outlaw of his own dark mind," and he has grown old in this woe-filled world. One of the major characteristics of the third Canto is the poet's romantic love of nature, which sounds amazingly Wordsworthian. Byron had always maintained that he detested all the Romantic poets except Shelley. Shelley, however, had read Wordsworth aloud to Byron and had changed his mind about this poet. Consequently, there are beautiful passages in this Canto that sound Wordsworthian.

Historical associations are maintained in this Canto. Byron visits Waterloo, a battle which constituted a victory for the opponents of liberalism:

And Harold stands upon this place
 of skulls,
 The grave of France, the deadly
 Waterloo!
 How in an hour the power which
 gave annals
 Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting
 too!
 In "pride of place" here last the
 eagle flew,
 Then tore with bloody talon the rent
 plain,
 Pierced by the shaft of banded na-
 tions through;
 Ambition's life and labors all were
 vain;
 He wears the shattered links of the
 world's broken chain.

The poet wonders if the earth is more free after Napoleon's fall, a lesson for all tyrants; he hoped that the answer is in the affirmative. In this Canto he continues his travels, going next to the Rhine, to the Alps, and to the Jura.

Canto IV, the longest of the four, was written eight years after the first. In it Byron abandons his pose of distinguishing between himself and Childe Harold; as he admits in a preface dedicated to John Hobhouse, with whom he had begun his European travels in 1809, the public refused to accept his statement that he was not writing autobiography but was fictionalizing a character. Byron says in this dedication that in this last Canto he had wanted to write on Italian literature and manners but could not do so under his former disguise. Therefore he had abandoned it.

Byron's comments on Italian literature constitute one of the major interests in this Canto. Venice, the first city visited, is still a beautiful place, though Tasso's echoes are no longer heard. The mountain village of Arquà sepulchers the bones of Petrarch, where he lived during his later years. Tasso is the glory of Ferrara. Dante sleeps far from "ungrateful Florence." Rome is haunted by the ghosts of her great men, stretching historically from the Scipios to Rienzi. But even more Byron is moved by the romantic aspects of nature:

There is a pleasure in the pathless
woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely
shore,
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its
roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature
more,

From these our interviews, in which
I steal
From all I may be, or have been be-
fore,
To mingle with the Universe, and
feel
What I can ne'er express, yet can not
all conceal.

The poem ends as it began, with the pose of the Byronic hero. He is weary of travel, jaded and wasted. He has written what he had to write. He wishes he could have done better, but he could not. With an irony that must have pleased him, he says that the pain of the travels of the Pilgrim must be his, but the moral should be the reader's:

Farewell! a work that must be, and
hath been—
A sound which makes us linger—yet
—farewell!
Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to
the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories
dwell
A thought which once was his, if on
ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal shoon and scallop
shell;
Farewell! with *him* alone may rest
the pain,
If such there were—with *you*, the moral
of his strain!

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is today a work of more than mere historical interest, more than one of the most characteristic books of the Romantic movement or important for its characterization of the Byronic hero. It is the revelation of one of the most whimsical, paradoxical, and gifted minds of the nineteenth century, and as such the poem remains stimulating and fascinating.

CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, YOUTH

Type of work: Novel
Author: Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)
Time: Early nineteenth century
Locale: A country estate in Russia; Moscow
First published: 1852; 1854; 1857

Principal characters:

VLADIMIR PETROVICH IRTENYEV, the narrator
PIOTR ALEXANDRYCH IRTENYEV, his father, a landowner
NATALYA NIKOLAYEVNA IRTENYEV, his mother
VOLODYA IRTENYEV, his older brother
LYUBA IRTENYEV, his younger sister
AVDOTYA VASSILYEVNA EPIFANOV, his stepmother
PRINCE DMITRI NEKLYUDOV, his friend in youth
SOPHIA IVANOVNA, Dimitri's aunt
MANYA IVANOVNA ("MIMI"), the governess to the Irtenyevs
KATYA, Mimi's daughter
SONYA VALAKHINA, the thrice beloved of the narrator
KARL IVANYCH, the narrator's German tutor
ST. JEROME, his French tutor
NATALYA SAVISHNA, the housekeeper at Petrovskoe

Childhood, Boyhood, Youth make up the three completed parts of a projected four-part sequence that is Tolstoy's first writing. One would suppose that with a novelist who generally used a certain amount of autobiography, these first works which appear in the form of an autobiography (using a first-person narrator) would be the bases for studying his work; but they have been neglected, and if anyone is to blame it is Tolstoy himself, who later in life rejected them for their false sentimentality. This is a pity, for, though the young man of the third volume is undoubtedly sentimental, the first two volumes show such a natural development of the character that his feelings seem natural, not only to himself but to all youth. This description of a particular childhood, boyhood, and youth has sufficient universal relevance to make it worth reading as a tender and real portrait of growing up anywhere at any time.

The three completed parts of the *Four Epochs of Growth*, the tentative title for the projected four, are of different lengths, with the first two amounting to slightly more than the third part, *Youth*, the longest of the three. Each section is structured around a chapter bearing the title of that part. Chapter 15 (of twenty-eight chapters) of *Childhood* is entitled "Childhood," Chapter 19 of the second part is "Boyhood," and Chapter 32 (of forty-five chapters in the third part) is

titled "Youth." These central chapters indicate not only the careful organization of each part but also the steady development of the central character in the flow of interconnected events which makes up the narrative. The interconnections (for instance, in the reappearance of characters like Sonya or visits to the country) are highlighted by the appearance of certain individual and freakish characters like the godly monk in the first part and the student who joins the army in the last; yet no character makes only one appearance. All are part of a web of incidents which shows a novelist's ability to live in the midst of a whole raft of living characters and which anticipates what will be a feature of Tolstoy's mature work.

Childhood begins with scenes on the family estate at Petrovskoe, the setting of the first fourteen chapters before the family moves to Moscow. At the end of this section the family returns to the estate for the death of the narrator's mother, followed by the death of her faithful servant, Natalya Savishna. The two sections, each composed of fourteen chapters, show the family as a closely related group of parents, children, servants (including tutors like Karl Ivanych and Mimi, and serfs), and dependents. Although the characteristics of the family members are to some extent developed, as in the chapter titled "What Kind of Man Was My Father?" the less important characters

make the deepest mark on the narrator as a child. These fall into two groups: adults like his tutor and grandmother, from whom he learns to see his father with a stranger's eyes, and playmates of his own age, from whom he learns about himself at the age of ten and knows that he is a dreamer and will suffer for his sensibilities.

Vladimir Petrovich's suffering begins when he notices as a child the contrast between rich and poor in his playmates, especially Katya. There is more to come in the second part, *Boyhood*, which begins with a journey to Moscow and ends with the death of his grandmother there, when he is nearly fifteen.

Volodya, his brother, and Lyuba, his sister, grow up with him but do not affect him as much as chance or unequal acquaintances. He begins to appreciate Katya's position now that her mother's protectress, his own mother, is dead. He sees that his family is not the center of the world. The consolation that we must endure what we cannot cure comes hard to him, especially when he begins to see what he amounts to in the eyes of the world. Then he begins to dream of solving the problems of the whole world as they continue to crowd in on his adolescent mind.

Thus Vladimir Petrovich concludes the second part, *Boyhood*, knowing both that he has a bad habit of dreaming himself into and out of situations and that he does so to escape conflicting feelings of pity and hate; these feelings, because they are inconsistent, he knows must be genuine. The narrator has become a sentimental boor and everything he touches turns to disaster. It is all very humorless and very Russian.

The second part ends with his discovery of his first real friend, Prince Dmitri. During the third and longest part, *Youth*, Vladimir Petrovich reaches the age of fifteen and is enrolled at the university in Moscow. He reacts to a much wider range of acquaintances by increasing

heights of joy and depths of despair. From the outside he looks like a ridiculous and loutish poseur, obsessed with notions of what is *comme il faut*; inside he suffers religious and romantic torments, as when he falls in love with Sonya for the third time. Although, as in other parts, the chapter entitled "Youth" analyzes his case, an earlier chapter entitled "Love" shows the essence of his problem. He distinguishes three kinds of love: of nature, of the beloved, and of humanity. The first has been shown in the descriptive passages throughout the book; the second is revealed in his feelings for the young and the old around him; the third kind he learns from Sophia Ivanovna, and it is shown in his relations with his inferiors. In this excess and confusion of feelings we have an early sketch of Pierre in *War and Peace* and an indication of how true both Pierre and Vladimir are to Tolstoy himself.

The last fifteen chapters of the third part extend *Youth* beyond the length of the other two sections and are mainly concerned with the disruption of the family following his father's second marriage to Avdotya Vassilyevna and the growing up of the children. Vladimir progressively fails at the university. Gradually he has grown convinced that the differences he feels between himself and his world are real and not the illusions of a young dreamer. He settles for the unhappy inner reality. We can only guess at what Tolstoy would have done with Vladimir in the projected fourth part, probably to be entitled *Manhood*. The best hypothesis is that Tolstoy broke off *Four Epochs of Growth* because it had served as his apprenticeship and he was now ready to begin writing in earnest. Page after page shows his gift for analyzing and using a multitude of minor characters in building up the internal analysis and life of his principals. The three parts of this work show not only the gradual creation of a protagonist but also the formative work of a great novelist.

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING

Type of work: Drama

Author: Arnold Wesker (1932-)

Time: The present

Locale: England

First presented: 1962

Principal characters:

PIP THOMPSON, a recruit from a fine old family

CORPORAL HILL, the recruits' trainer

CHARLES WINGATE, a recruit who would like to improve himself

ANDREW MCCLURE, a sensitive recruit

ARCHIE CANNIBAL,

WILFE SEAFORD,

WHITEY RICHARDSON,

DODGER COHEN,

DICKEY SMITH, and

SMILER WASHINGTON, recruits

WING COMMANDER, the officer in charge of the installation

THE SQUADRON LEADER, the officer who is charged with locating infractions of rules

THE PILOT OFFICER, the officer who is the self-appointed guardian of cleanliness

P. T. INSTRUCTOR FLIGHT SERGEANT, the physical training instructor

This play was Arnold Wesker's first popular work, although his previous plays had enjoyed considerable artistic success. Like all of his plays, *Chips with Everything* delineates an aspect of contemporary society, not stopping at pointing out faults, but going on to point toward solutions. Wesker's drama is, in fact, an extension of a general concern with social causes, and his identification with those causes is as strong on the stage as it is off.

Wesker also continues his interest in the psychology of the individual character in *Chips with Everything*. At first the play seems to be without a plot. A group of recruits meet at a training camp and several episodes occur which have some comic or dramatic interest as episodes: Corporal Hill plays the stereotyped drill sergeant; the recruits have their first drill lesson during which it is discovered that Smiler is physically unable to stop smiling; the various officers introduce themselves and in doing so reveal their individual perversions; Pip Thompson tells the history of his distinguished family; there is a Christmas party which degenerates into a fight and a confrontation be-

tween Pip and the officers; and Pip organizes and directs a very funny sequence in which the recruits steal some coal from the camp's central supply. However, there is little apparent connection between these events except that the same people are involved in each before the second act.

In the second act the play begins to take shape, and what seems to have been a series of discrete events merges into a distinct pattern. That pattern cannot be equated, however, with the traditional plot in which a problem is introduced, complicated, and ultimately solved. *Chips with Everything* is closer to life than that: the basic assumption of the play is that in life the patterns lie inside the characters, and whenever anything significant occurs it happens within the individual. The only way to approach the play is through the characters who undergo the most changes in the course of the action.

The first characters who need to be accounted for in an analysis of the play are those who do not change, those in whom those changes have already occurred

which are the builders of a man's eventual character. Corporal Hill is a contradiction. On the one hand, he is the caricature of the drill sergeant, tough, unfeeling, and dedicated to the single-minded purpose of turning out perfect fighting men. On the other hand, he is genuinely concerned with the welfare of the recruits assigned to him, with seeing that they have the opportunity to work out their individual problems on their own terms.

The Wing Commander is dedicated to two propositions: first, that the military commitment is the most important concern of contemporary society; two, that the fighting men of the line are trash and it is the duty of the upper classes to mold that trash into worthy articles to be adapted into the social apparatus. The Squadron Leader believes that the only duty of the average man is discipline and obedience and the duty of the members of the upper classes is to command that discipline and obedience.

The Pilot Officer is obsessed with cleanliness. He sees the whole world as a breeding place for bacteria that have no function but to create disease. It is his self-appointed duty to clean up that breeding ground and to make it sterile. Similarly, the Physical Training Instructor sees as his duty the building of Greek gods. The average man is, to him, an anaemic creature unworthy of living in an enlightened society.

These men are important because they form the environment in which the action takes place. It is in reaction to them that the character changes which form the substance of the play occur. In terms of any social allegory which may be intended, it is impossible to ignore the obvious affinities that this environment has with the kind of environment the Nazis tried to create in the 1930's.

Although all of the characters change, and significantly, two of the recruits exemplify the kind of change that informs the drama. Smiler Washington is, like all of the recruits except Pip, from the slums

of London. He is afflicted with a singular malady—he is physically unable to stop smiling and his face is frozen in a perpetual expression of mirth. He is a kind of contemporary Billy Budd, overcome by a disability he has no means to correct. In fact, at the beginning the parallel with Billy Budd seems to be so exact that it must have been planned. Smiler seems to be beloved by all, a friendly, gentle man who can bring himself to offend no one.

Smiler soon reveals, however, that he is far from the epitome of happy innocence. He becomes petulant, constantly picking fights with his fellow recruits. He is morose and unpleasant, and the irony of his smiling face is soon apparent. His face is a constant irritation to his superiors. Corporal Hill sees the eternal smile as a satiric comment on the training itself and the Pilot Officer sees Smiler's ever-bared teeth as a breeding ground for germs. It is soon apparent that there is no place in this society for perpetual happiness.

Erasing the smile from Smiler's lips becomes an important project for the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, who berate him constantly in the attempt to prove that his smile is voluntary. Finally, he runs away, only to return to the camp for reasons of his own never revealed to the audience. The only explanation that is offered is that he found that he could not go on alone.

Pip Thompson becomes in the course of the play the most important character. Both his fellow recruits and his superiors are puzzled because he has chosen to enter military service as a lowly recruit. The first explanation offered is too simple: he is revolting against his father, who was a distinguished general in the last war. But it is soon clear that Pip's rebellion goes much deeper than that. He constantly denies that his father is the source of his rebellion, yet he just as constantly calls up his father and his family as being representative of his rebellion.

He is surely not possessed of an active social conscience. He reiterates time and

time again his disdain for the problems and concerns of his fellow recruits and the only times he joins with them in any concerted effort to improve their conditions are a few occasions when his personal comfort is affected, when the recruits need coal for their fire. Pip rejects all offers of close friendship just as easily as he rebuffs those among his fellow recruits who try to bait him because of his upper-class background.

Consequently, all of the recruits and officers find that their most pressing problem is to decide what Pip's motives are. Some think that he is merely "slumming" for a lark. Others ascribe to him a social conscience he consistently denies. The officers are convinced that he is simply trying to punish his father by being as imperfect a follower as his father was a perfect leader. The only interest in the men's welfare that Pip ever evidences is his concern that they not let the officers manipulate them. He paints a picture of the lower classes as a mass of easily manipulated objects. What finally emerges as Pip's driving force is a concern that men not let themselves be treated so. He does not want the men to allow the officers to use them, and he himself does not

want to be manipulated by his society into becoming an officer and a gentleman.

The irony is that at the end of the second act Pip has been successful in inspiring the men to a semblance of authentic action. They stand up to the officers and refuse to allow Smiler to be jailed for running away. But Pip has capitulated. The officers have evidently won and have convinced him to take what they conceive of as his proper place, that of an officer. In the last scene, as he dons his officer's uniform, he ironically congratulates the men on their action. Finally Pip, now an officer, reads off their assignments to the men.

The exact meaning of all this is not clear. Is Wesker saying that the lower classes have nowhere to go but up, but the upper classes have nowhere to go but further into decadence? Is he saying that there is hope for the reformed but none for the reformer? Or is he simply creating a powerful human experience which illuminates, however dimly, all experience. In any case the play is a strong statement about the importance of the individual and of his individual actions.

CHRONIQUE

Type of work: Poetry

Author: St.-John Perse (Alexis St.-Léger Léger, 1887-)

First published: 1960

To a man whose first poems were published in 1909 and who, though widely acclaimed by his fellow writers, remained for years totally unknown outside literary circles, public honors have at last come in rich measure. In the space of little more than a year he was awarded the Nobel Prize, the National Grand Prize for Literature in Paris, and the International Prize for Poetry in Belgium. Furthermore, he was chosen by eighty-six French poets to bear the title of "Prince of Poets," an honor that he declined. Lastly, he was given the Award of Merit by the

American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1960.

It is unfortunately true that today, in spite of an ever-widening reading public, poetry is less and less read, and a thousand times it has been explained that this avoidance of poetry is the direct result of its constantly increasing difficulty. Nowadays it is taken for granted that any contemporary poem will be obscure; that it will be packed with either literary or personal allusions that are incomprehensible to the reader, or that the syntax and imagery will be so densely woven as to pre-

sent an impenetrable jungle. Of no modern poet are these statements truer than of Perse. The natural question of the reader: "What is this poem about?" is extremely hard to answer when the poem is by St.-John Perse, who is quoted as having described his poetry as "a long single sentence without break and forever unintelligible."

On the subject of obscurity in modern poetry the author had something to say in his speech of acceptance of the Nobel Award, to the effect that poetry is obscure, not because of its nature but because it explores the darkness of the human soul and the mystery of being. To this statement the impatient reader might conceivably reply, "Is the human soul any darker at the present than it has been hitherto? Is the mystery enveloping human existence any darker than in the past?" One would like to have the poet's answer.

But to turn to the poem itself. It is a prose poem, the author's usual vehicle, though somewhat shorter and hence more compressed than are some of his earlier works. It is written in his familiar style: an elaborate chant, a kind of solemn invocation, as if the author were addressing a divinity that could be approached only through a sonorous, ritualistic ceremony. In reading the poetry of Perse, one always has the impression of a ceremony—not of the rococo ceremony of Versailles but of an almost archaic rite out of some very ancient, primitive civilization. The long, sweeping sentences full of superlatives (*très haut*, *très grand* occur again and again) have the lofty dignity of a Greek chorus and the impersonality of a traditional invocation chanted by priests.

The invocation of *Chronique*, however, is addressed to the "Great Age" in which man now finds himself. It is an age, a century, whose entrails and viscera have been rent, when the finger of man has been probing into the sky. Man surges forward on his unlimited course like a horseman who is driving his steed with its last ounce of strength to cross

some high mountain pass, buffeted by a great wind that bends him back. One might say that the poet beholds the countless generations of men without names, without even faces, pushing forward to this great victory at the crest. It is this age, in which man, having slowly gathered together all his forces over uncounted centuries, has at last reached his fulfillment, ready to face what may come, for tomorrow there will be the thunder and lightning of the summit.

This has been the age of man's probing into the sky to unravel the last secrets of nature because we could no longer accept ignorance as our lot. For the elders with their stone books have failed us: they did not speak the living word. Science alone cannot fulfill man's needs. Here the author touches on one of the most fought-over questions of the last century and a half: does the scientist or the poet offer the clearer way to truth? Beginning, perhaps, with Jeremy Bentham and the Utilitarians, the cry has grown ever stronger that only science can give us ultimate truth; that poetry is at best, as Bentham claimed, only a minor pleasure, to be cultivated by a few. In his speech already referred to, Perse put himself in the tradition of Blake and Shelley, for, though not claiming that poetry is pure reality, he does maintain that it gives us a reality beyond the scope of the scientist. Modern science has opened to man vistas filled with the greatest drama, but the spiritual adventure of poetry need yield nothing to science. Indeed, Perse claims for poetry a very high place: it rekindles the fire of man's passion in his search for truth.

In awarding the Nobel Prize, the Swedish Academy spoke of Perse's "soaring flight and the evocative imagery of his poetry." This citation expresses very well the special technique that the author has developed. We have returned to Baudelaire's "Correspondences," where "Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent." The difference is that Perse has turned his back on the source from

which contemporary poetry has derived most of its images and correspondences and its unusual associations; that is, the stony city, the megalopolis in which modern man is trapped. Perse goes instead to the life of simple yet immensely dignified people: herdsmen, sailors, villagers. These people are timeless in that we never know when or even where they live, except that they are members of some primitive society and that their lives are marked by a kind of archaic gravity. Perhaps a childhood spent in the West Indies gave Perse this feeling for the primitive, as it unquestionably gave him the tropical luxuriance of imagery that has been characteristic of his previous verse.

One critic has said of Perse that he has used rare words with greater success than has any other French poet since Hugo. The reader, however, never feels that the poet has been combing lexicons for unusual language; these words seem to come naturally to him. Again, the background of the tropics has provided him with a vocabulary filled with names of plants and animals little known to the reader from other shores: the frigate bird, the harpy eagle, the wizard snake. He is fond of terms drawn from zoölogy, botany, geology. *Chronique*, however, is

more restrained, even austere; the landscape is not that of a tropical island or of some unnamed ancient city (as in *Sea-marks*)—it is the whole earth from all sides. The landscape is more stylized, as in an illuminated manuscript, to suit the solemnity and impersonality of the invocation, for in *Chronique* the poet is even more impersonal than is his custom, as if he were speaking through the mask of a Greek actor. His style has even been called "haughty"; yet its manner is not so much haughtiness as the gravity befitting a solemn occasion. So much of modern poetry has been characterized by the conversational tone introduced by Eliot that we are no longer accustomed to the "grand manner" and it seems strange to us.

And what of this century when, as Perse says, man lives on what is beyond death? For the poet it is not an age of despair. Man is the herdsman of the future; he need not cover his face, for he has the knowledge that his soul is growing to greatness. It is an age that demands the most that man can give, and it is towards this crest that he has been struggling through the centuries. Perse's long, slow, solemnly chanted invocation ends with an appeal for the "Great Age" to look upon us and take the measure of our hearts.

THE CLOUD FOREST

Type of work: Nature notes and travel

Author: Peter Matthiessen (1927-)

Time: November, 1959-April, 1960

Locale: The Amazon jungle, the Andean cloud forest and sierra, Tierra del Fuego

First published: 1961

If nature books are not widely read today, one reason may be that among naturalists the scientist has taken precedence over the poet. Good nature writing is more than a process of observation, classification, and reporting, and our best natural historians from William Bartram on have infused their work with the larger vision which gives grace and wonder to the particularities of landscapes and

things. But for every Henry David Thoreau, W. H. Hudson, John Burroughs, John Muir, or Rachel Carson to whom we can point, there have been scores of other writers about nature who showed themselves strong on facts but short on insight and style. The qualities of a good naturalist, like those of the good writer of travel books, are not hard to catalogue: curiosity, imagination, the power to ab-

sorb and organize facts, the ability to re-create scene and image in language, a sure hold on the world of the senses. When the naturalist and the traveler exist in the same person, the combination is a happy one.

Peter Matthiessen belongs to the select company of those who have enriched our knowledge of the wilderness and the wildlife to be found there. He is a novelist also, and a good one, and he brings to his nature writing the same sense of scene, imagination, and passion for realistic detail that we find in his fiction. Matthiessen is more than a novelist who makes nature his hobby, for there is nothing dilettantish in his method. When he writes about the wilderness and its creatures, his intelligence and his feelings are alike involved; he penetrates beneath the surfaces of things and creates an act of vision or a mood. *Wildlife in America* was the book in which he first demonstrated the clean skill with which he joins scientific information and illuminating perception in his spare yet evocative prose. In that forthright, disturbing book he presented the first really comprehensive survey of the endangered wildlife of forests, prairies, and waters in the diminishing unspoiled regions that are being swallowed up by industry and urbanization all the way across America. In *The Cloud Forest*, he has ventured into an almost unmapped part of the world in order to bring back an honest and fascinating report on what he found there.

The book is beautifully structured, a traveler's journal bringing together nature notes, descriptive sketches, and personal adventure. The long journey, covering in all some twenty thousand miles in the next five months, begins quietly enough with the departure of the M.S. *Venimos* from a Brooklyn pier on a cold November evening. The freighter is bound for Iquitos, Peru, a river port twenty-three hundred miles up the Amazon. Matthiessen's destination is less certain: the Andean rain forest and the sierra, Mato Grosso, and Tierra del Fuego. Though his route

may remain unplanned, his reason for the trip is clear in his mind, the desire to see the last wild terrains of the earth's last wilderness before they are transformed by advancing civilization. Today these are to be found, except for Antarctic and the oceans, in South America. But if Matthiessen is in a hurry to reach those faraway places, the *Venimos* is not. The freighter follows a leisurely course that takes in the Bermudas, Haiti, the Windward Islands, Barbados, Trinidad, and British Guiana before it finally arrives at the Brazilian port of Belém. Along the way Matthiessen has had time to make a record of everything he sees—sea birds, weather, the marine life of the Sargasso Sea, the native life in a dozen ports of call.

Once the *Venimos* has begun the long voyage up the Amazon, Matthiessen is aware that he is following a course already covered by several distinguished travelers who also wrote books about their observations and experiences, the naturalist H. W. Bates in the nineteenth century, H. M. Tomlinson and Peter Fleming in this. Although comparison is inevitable. *The Cloud Forest* holds its own beside *The Sea and the Jungle* and *Brazilian Adventure*. Matthiessen's account of the upriver voyage lacks the metaphysical dimension of Tomlinson's travel classic; that is a loss, but the only one. Certainly he has written a more thoughtful and personal book than the story of exploration that Fleming told with such Etonian nonchalance.

Like all travelers in the outlands, Matthiessen falls in with the ubiquitous missionaries and like most, again, he is of mixed opinions about them. He finds a note of the incongruous in the village where two loudspeakers regularly carry Baptist hymns and messages to the Catholic natives. For the missionaries in the lonely jungle compounds he has a great deal of respect, but recognition of the good they do is tempered by the realization that frequently the missionary is speeding up the destructive processes of

"civilization" to which the Indian finds it almost impossible to adapt. His belief is that the Indian tribe brought into contact with the white man on the latter's terms has possibly only half a century of tribal identity and existence left; and he supports this claim by citing examples of the Carajas, who declined in number from approximately one hundred thousand to about two thousand between 1845 and the present, and of other tribes already extinct. Matthiessen's sympathy is clearly for the Indian, lost in the time of his own customs and remote beyond jungles and rivers, creatures as much a part of the wilderness as the birds, animals, and reptiles that he writes about with such vividness and clarity.

In Pucallpa, a colorful but ugly Peruvian outpost at the foot of the Andes, Matthiessen first heard of a tremendous fossil mandible, so large that five or six men could not lift it, to be seen in the jungle not far from the Inuya River. Incredulous at first, he was told by others whose word he respected that his informant was a man not given to tall tales. That story, as well as vague rumors of some pre-Inca ruins, still unknown to explorers, to be found near the Picha River, led eventually to Matthiessen's hazardous journey through the rushing Pongo de Mainique in flood time. First, however, he went on to visit Lima and Cuzco, inspected the monolithic Inca fortress, Sacahuaman, and traveled to the famous mountain city of ruins, Machu Picchu. Then he was off to Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and Tierra del Fuego. Puerto Montt, in Chile, is the southern limit of travel in South America. Cape Horn, however, is more than one thousand miles to the south, and that was Matthiessen's destination, or as close to it as he could get. For no other reason than a long-standing desire he visited Patagonia, the Strait of Magellan, and Tierra del Fuego, bleak regions made famous by Darwin, and then returned to the Mato Grosso in Brazil.

By early April he was in Cuzco prepar-

ing to set out on an expedition to find the giant fossil he had heard about in Pucallpa several months before. His white companion on the venture was Andrés Porras Cáceres, a jungle veteran and the brother of a Peruvian friend. Their journey took them down the Urubamba River through a region partly unmapped and almost unknown to white men. From the beginning things went badly. They had difficulty with Indian guides, supplies, suspicious or hostile planters. A guide, César Cruz, failed to show up at the appointed meeting place. By the time they arrived in an area controlled by a sinister family named Pereira they had practically committed themselves to the descent of the flood-swollen Urubamba through the dreaded rapids called the Pongo de Mainique. Aboard a raft made of six balsa logs and guided by three Machiguenga Indians—Torbio, Raul, and Agostino—they passed through the dreadful canyon without accident. Later Matthiessen learned that few travelers have ever traveled the rapids during the season of high water and that he and Andrés Porras were probably the first white men ever to do so in flood time.

The discovery of the fossil jaw—for Matthiessen finally found Cruz, who guided him to the site—is almost an anticlimax after the adventure of riding the Pongo. The aftermath was even more anticlimactic. Peruvian authorities confiscated the fossil on the complaint of an alleged owner and refused to allow the jaw, the remnant of some giant prehistoric reptile, to be removed to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Matthiessen had to be satisfied with some excellent photographs reproduced in his book. He never did find the Picha ruins.

The Cloud Forest may easily become a classic of its kind in the succession of books about South America by such writers as Hudson and Bates. It has the authentic touch that Thoreau once described in his journal: "In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is

only another name for tameness. It is the untamed, uncivilized, free and wild thinking in Hamlet, in the Iliad, and in all the scriptures and mythologies that delights us,—not learned in the schools, not refined and polished by art. A truly good book is something as wildly natural and primitive, mysterious and marvellous,

ambrosial and fertile, as a fungus or a lichen." Peter Matthiessen's book tells us about the conditions of nature and of man among other creatures in nature's wilds. Henry Thoreau, walker in the wilderness, naturalist, and poet, would have approved.

COLD COMFORT FARM

Type of work: Novel

Author: Stella Gibbons (1902-)

Time: Before World War II

Locale: Cold Comfort Farm, Howling, Sussex; London

First published: 1932

Principal characters:

FLORA POSTE, a newly-orphaned gentlewoman
AUNT ADA DOOM, Flora's aunt, the mistress of Cold Comfort
JUDITH STARKADDER, Ada's daughter and Flora's cousin
AMOS STARKADDER, Judith's husband, a "Quiverer"
REUBEN STARKADDER, Judith's elder son
SETH STARKADDER, Judith's younger son
ELPHINE STARKADDER, Judith's daughter
URK, a Starkadder relation and farmhand
BIG BUSINESS, Cold Comfort's stud bull
ADAM LAMBSBREATH, the cowherd at Cold Comfort
MRS. AGONY BEETLE, the cook-housekeeper at Cold Comfort
MERIAM BEETLE, her daughter
MRS. SMILING, Flora's London friend
CHARLES FAIRFORD, Flora's cousin and fiancé
MR. MYBUG (MEYERBURG), a writer

Cold Comfort Farm is the private jest of a young woman of high spirits and firmly sensible convictions. In form it parodies the English "country" novel from Thomas Hardy to D. H. Lawrence, Constance Holmes, and Mary Webb, particularly the work of the two women writers who were popular in prewar England about the time Stella Gibbons composed her counterblast.

The guiding genius is that of Jane Austen who, like the heroine, Flora, did not approve of mess; "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery" announces the epigraph in a quotation from *Mansfield Park*.

The novel contains a number of ripostes to fashionable fads which now tend to confuse the issue, but the object of the parody has become so popular, especially

Lawrence, that the novel's continued readership is practically guaranteed, making it a minor classic of its kind. Most of the fun is satirical and depends on an almost complete identification of author and heroine, young Flora Poste. In the course of the novel Flora deals a great many objects a number of glancing blows, but she comes off unscathed herself and apparently preserves her own virtues intact. The greatest of these virtues is common sense.

There are three grades of satire: mild, as in the case of Mrs. Smiling and her rather odd band of "Pioneer-O" (English gentlemen who govern the Empire in Kenya and other out-of-the-way places); tasty, as in the country gentry; and sharp, as in the treatment reserved for the inhabitants of Cold Comfort. But behind

these stand two literary types which the novel as a whole satirizes, the drama of the earth and the romance of young love. Stella Gibbons chooses the latter as her vehicle, so that the novel begins in murk and ends in romantic radiance.

The murk begins in Chapter Three, which opens with a description of dawn creeping over Cold Comfort Farm. While Adam Lambsbreath milks the cows (Aimless, Feckless, Pointless, and Graceless), Seth, Judith's son, lounges home from his philandering with Moll of the mill, Violet of the Vicarage, or Ivy of the ironmongery. The breakfast porridge snarls in its "snood" over the open fire. Seth quarrels with his mother and goes off to mock Big Business, the stud bull; the porridge boils over; the fire goes out. Sussex promises to be an adequate challenge to Flora's common sense when she accepts the invitation of her Aunt Ada Doom to visit Cold Comfort Farm.

Since there are some thirteen men on the farm and at least five women, together with a number more in the village below, Flora's tidy mind has much to work on. She is defeated only by Adam Lambsbreath, who remains nonsensical to the end.

Flora's first common-sense triumph is to have her bedroom curtains washed by Meriam, the hired girl who has just fallen in labor the night before; Seth is the suspected father. Flora finds that this is an annual visitation and combines directions for washing the curtains with some clear and simple advice about contraception, thus putting a stop to Meriam's annual tribute to the animal atmosphere of the Farm. After pumping Mrs. Beetle and Adam, and listening to each Starkadder accuse the others, she forms a comprehensive plan of campaign, chiefly directed at Aunt Ada Doom through Elphine, Amos, and Seth. Aunt Ada remains closeted in the upper regions of the farmhouse and controls the farm folk by insisting that she is mad and will get madder if any Starkadder leaves Cold Comfort; her chief weapon is to remind

the Starkadders that her childhood was warped because she had seen some nasty sight in the woodshed.

The campaign of common sense has both strategy and tactics. The strategy depends on making the Starkadders line up to their literary prototype or stereotype. Although on the surface the farm appears to offer cold comfort to a sensible young manager, underneath it is a cauldron of primal appetites. Flora discovers the little weakness in Aunt Ada's hold on the Starkadders: the family are all in secret revolt. Seth is passionately interested in the movies; Reuben and the others falsify the farm accounts they show to Aunt Ada; Amos longs to become a peripatetic evangelist; and most of the Starkadders hide their wives in the village of Howling. Flora's many-sided plan is to bring these revolts into the open, thus providing a hectic and shifting pattern of events which is highly comic but sometimes confusing.

Flora's tactics, therefore, are to isolate the members of the family one by one from Aunt Ada. Flora begins with Amos; she attends his Bethel of "Quiverers" and encourages his ambitions to spread the Word by tempting him with the vision of a Ford van, complete with loudspeakers, in which he can visit all the sinful fairs and markets in the country. She is eventually so successful that Amos departs for the United States, his genius having been recognized by a visiting American evangelist, and he leaves Cold Comfort farm to Reuben. The latter is thus brought round to support Flora's schemes for the rest of the family.

The main plot is the rescue of Elphine from her pixie preferences and from the earthy clutches of Urk. The latter's claim to Elphine has been blood-linked with the "water voles" by having her feeding bottle marked with their blood. One might say that the initiation of the main plot is symbolized in Flora's release of Big Business as she and Elphine leave for a day in London's dress shops, hairdressing establishments, and society restaurants.

The transformation from pixie curls and nouveau art cape to shining bob and white satin gratifies Elphine; the new beauty is first shown to the county at a ball for the young local squire, with such romantic effect that the squire announces his engagement to Elphine.

This social success is achieved with the help of both Seth and Charles Fairford, Flora's cousin, and in spite of the persistent attentions of Mr. Mybug, a visiting writer who plagues Flora with his insistent recognition of phallic symbols in country life, a response to the yeasty atmosphere of Cold Comfort, Big Business, and Seth which is directly contrary to Flora's plans, which are grounded in common sense.

The most earthy scene in the book occurs when Flora's party returns to Cold Comfort after the County Ball. They find that yeasty atmosphere heaving because the "sukebinde" has burst into flower and its overpowering scent, heady but also smacking of the loins, affects everyone, notably Aunt Ada Doom, who has descended to the flagged kitchen to conduct an awesome ritual known as "The Counting." Amos defies Aunt Ada and departs, and the other Starkadders become distinctly restless; events follow thick and fast to make this the last "Counting" at Cold Comfort.

Urk is fobbed off with Meriam. Later Mr. Mybug is accommodated with a spare sex-starved Starkadder female. The next day an American film director calls on Flora and sweeps Seth off to Holly-

wood. (When Aunt Ada brings up the something nasty she had seen in the woodshed, the director asks whether it had been her.) Shortly after, Judith is handed over to an amiable psychiatrist who receives the full flood of her starved affections. Mrs. Agony Beetle, Adam Lambsbreath, and Big Business are all content in their various ways; only Aunt Ada remains to be dealt with.

The time of the novel is supposed to be "the near future" as conceived in the early 1930's, and much has happened since. This Utopian projection accounts for such things as TV phones and a restaurant over the Thames constructed wholly of glass. Both leaps of the imagination pale beside the approaching reality; today they serve to date the novel or at least emphasize the capriciousness of the author's fancy.

Similarly, a number of the witticisms, satire at the expense of London's literati of the 1930's, principally in the person of Mr. Mybug, sometimes escape the reader. This is most obvious in the author's mock "Foreword" to "Anthony Pookworthy," the private fun of which is likely to escape the reader today. On the other hand, the satire of academic idiocy in Mr. Mybug's (his name is really Meyerburg) defense of Branwell Brontë as the author of the novels believed to have been written by sisters Anne, Charlotte, and Emily is still enjoyable. Cold Comfort Farm, Howling, near Beershorn, Sussex, is now part of the literary geography of the English language.

THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF D. H. LAWRENCE

Author: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

First published: *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Aldous Huxley, 1932; *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Harry T. Moore, 1962

One's understanding of D. H. Lawrence cannot be considered complete without a careful perusal of *The Collected Letters*. For there is a side of Lawrence that, while it is found elsewhere, receives its fullest expression only in the

letters—a side that, beneath all the tensions of his life, is cheerful, optimistic, affirmative. Lawrence's belief in the ultimate sanctity of physical being finds its embodiment not only in formal essays and narratives, but in these informal

meditations that reflect his day-to-day existence.

This aspect had already been revealed in 1932, when Aldous Huxley published an impressive collection of Lawrence letters. Moore draws heavily on Huxley's edition in the expanded collection. Appearing less than two years after Lawrence's death, the Huxley book was a great achievement, and many Lawrence scholars have an almost sentimental attachment to the pioneer volume of letters. But the time has long been ripe for a more comprehensive collection, one that would include not only many unpublished letters, but items in the myriad volumes of memoirs and biographies. *The Collected Letters*, however, is scarcely complete; no collection could be. Many letters will still have to be consulted in the Huxley volume and from other sources; secondary items and duplicative letters were, as Moore ruefully points out, excised.

The earliest item is a postcard dated 1903, shortly after Lawrence had turned eighteen. At this point he was still very much the miner's son seeking a way out by attending a pupil-teacher center. The girl to whom the postcard is addressed is one of a group of friends known as the Pagans. The last letter, dated 1930, is from a sanatorium at Vence, France, a few days before his death. The intervening pages form the most complete epistolary record we have thus far of a major modern writer: his private life, his struggles with public and publishers, his friends—who often came and went in a rather kaleidoscopic way—his thought, the temper of his mind. They remind one most forcefully of the extent to which a writer is an intuitive register of his time, and therefore of time to come. Depressed and disgusted with the outbreak of World War I, Lawrence, from the beginning, is concerned with what is to follow, and in his musings he foreshadows the disillusionment of the 1920's. The society that could produce such a war is obviously sick, wrote Lawrence, but the

society that is to follow, one that will contain the moral cripples blasted by the war, is almost too horrible to comprehend.

The Collected Letters creates a distinct *persona*. Rarely do his letters provide us with the sort of immediate, unfiltered reactions to experience that we find in other letters. His are more meditative and reasoned in tone. That fact might imply distortion. Nevertheless, the Lawrence we get is clearly a genuine Lawrence, one who persists below the surface of daily events. This Lawrence possesses the serene face of the man who has the capacity and the courage simply to be, who has discovered his own center of existence and refuses to be disturbed too much by the trivia and the peevishness of others, who is concerned that others learn, not certain rules and regulations, but how to live, and who is, therefore, fiercely against anything he considers a denial of life. Oddly, for the comparison would be shunned by the earlier author, he reminds one in these pages of an earlier idealist, Thoreau, who asserted: "I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life." Thus, in one letter, we find Lawrence asserting that one ought to fulfill as the deepest of all desires the wish to avoid the extraneous, to live only for pure relationships and living truth. The point is made over and over again in the letters: the need to put aside extraneous pressures, those of money and property, and to cultivate one's soul. This idea would not be foreign to the author of *Walden*, though, of course, Thoreau would scarcely have taken Lawrence's road to immortality.

Lawrence's desire is a general wish to distinguish between what is life and what is not-life, between being and not-being (Lawrence likes to quote Hamlet here). It is as part of this general desire that we get the specific ideas with which Lawrence has been identified and that we discover that those ideas are scarcely as specialized as they might seem to be in other contexts, as in his *Fantasia of the*

Unconscious, for example. Here we find the very important letter of January 17, 1913, to Ernest Collins, a letter containing the first relatively systematic statement of Lawrence's belief in the emotions, in the body, in the sense of physical being, as against the abstract knowledge of life provided by the intellect, knowledge which, to Lawrence, is not knowledge at all. Here we find his attacks on Freud and Freudianism as being too abstract, too intellectual, in their approaches to man's hidden life. Here, in another important letter of July 16, 1916, to Catherine Carswell, we find Lawrence distinguishing his own views from those of Christianity, accepting the Christian ethic as the greatest historical force ever to sweep through mankind, but seeing it, as did George Bernard Shaw, as something to be surpassed. A new ethic is now needed, he claimed, one that will encourage the fulfillment of bodily as well as spiritual desires. Developed and modified in essays, fiction, and later letters, these concepts ultimately become the center of Lawrence's final statement on man and his time in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

In a very real sense these letters are better sources of Lawrence's attitudes than his more formal statements of them, for here those attitudes can be seen as aspects of his larger concerns—that man learn to love, not to hate, life, that he become capable of living joyously by developing his total self, not by denying any part of his being. Lawrence is, of course, fully aware of the fact that to a large extent he is reacting against his own problems. In September, 1913, after having run away with Frieda (then still married), he identifies himself as typically English in his repression of passions and emotions. After living some months with Frieda, he writes that he is learning to loosen up a little.

To a reader reared on the assumption that contemporary authors are always negative and dismal, perhaps one of the most startling aspects of *The Collected Letters*

is the view it provides us of Lawrence's optimism, an optimism that could turn on occasion into an almost aggressive affirmation. It is scarcely a Pollyanna-like optimism. In one of the most haunting letters in the collection, written to Lady Cynthia Asquith, in January, 1915, Lawrence describes the depths of despair and hopelessness into which the news of the war had plunged him. He had been on a walking tour with some friends, and the sense of life was running high among them, when he learned that war had been declared. Since then, according to Lawrence, he has not seen anyone, spoken to anyone. Only now is he beginning to rise from his grave; he begins to hope that something may emerge from the war. As his spirits rise, so does his hope. Lawrence begins to hope, as did many of his generation, that the very destructiveness of the war may lead to the sort of smash-up that will require a social reconstruction, and the world may then be ready to listen to him. As it becomes evident that the smash-up is not going to take place, Lawrence falls back on his affirmation of the roots of life itself. Thus, in the darkest days of his career, toward the end of the war, we find him asserting the need for a carefree, spontaneous existence, the need to be. Shortly after the end of the war, while making plans to leave England, Lawrence writes cheerily that the important thing is not to be crushed; the capacity to live is the only thing that matters.

The clearest suggestion that there was something in Lawrence that could not be touched came during the war when Lawrence was looked upon suspiciously by his Cornish neighbors and apparently suspected of spying (Frieda was, after all, a Richthofen). Lawrence was ordered away from the coast on a few days' notice. We know from biographical sources how deeply hurt and outraged he was. In a less balanced man, the affair might well have become the center of his life. In the letters, however, we find Lawrence, after his initial shock, taking it all pretty much

in stride. Ablaze with plans, he discovers that he is not really anxious to return to Cornwall. Infuriated again, after a visit from Scotland Yard, he manages to drop his fury with surprising speed; he has other matters on his mind—his new novel, literary essays, friends. Without rancor he can write of renting his cottage in Cornwall.

Even the suppression and censorship of his novels, embittering and demeaning as

they were, failed to crush Lawrence. After *The Rainbow* was suppressed, we find him correcting proofs, collecting early poems for a book, trying out the idea of a subscription scheme for *The Rainbow*. He believed in his books as he believed in life and in himself. The reader who would know Lawrence can really know him only through his letters as well as his biography and his published works.

COLOR OF DARKNESS

Type of work: Short stories

Author: James Purdy (1923-)

First published: 1957

Color of Darkness is James Purdy's first book. It is a collection of eleven short stories and a novella, throughout which ordinary human experiences are purposely exaggerated so that a covert truth may find expression.

He has since written novels, more short stories, and plays. But it is a writer's first book which serves as a signpost to the road of his intention. It points the way to his personal arena; the piece of ground that he has cleared away and marked out as his own. It betokens the sort of problem with which he shall concern himself, and the types of people. In Purdy's case it indicates a penchant for unusual, often bizarre, situations which his characters seem hardly to notice. The outlandish is handled with nonchalance and the mundane contains the outlandish.

Each story, like a candle, would guide us through the darkness, but some burn more and others less intensely. In the more skillful stories, "Sound of Talking," "Cutting Edge," and the title story, "Color of Darkness," we as readers are inescapably confronted with one of our own hidden human secrets: our contact with each other makes us the helpless victims of ambivalence. And the life-long lesson that there is no hate, *must* be no hate, for our dear ones forces us to conceal the truth that we only sometimes ac-

knowledge, and with which we even secretly sympathize. In *Color of Darkness* Purdy tries courageously to explore that hidden passageway and to shine his light on the unreasoning, frightening ambivalence which, in all its frustrating, infuriating shame permits a child to brutalize its pet and then to hug it lovingly and tearfully.

It is "Sound of Talking," probably the best of his stories, in which Purdy demonstrates how surely he can implicate his reader. A woman is talking to her husband in the kitchen. Paralyzed, the man is in a wheelchair; and he is in pain. We know about the man, Vergil, because we have access to Mrs. Farebrother's thoughts, and she knows him very well. She counters his steady flow of bilious expletives with a loquacity designed to distract him from his pain. By the time the reader realizes that the deceptively innocent kitchen is really Mrs. Farebrother's wheelchair and that she is irrevocably locked into her husband's ebbing life, he has already witnessed and sympathized with her impotent flutterings of chatter. By allowing ourselves to welcome her to our fire, we must recognize, when it reveals itself, that her ambivalence is a reflection of our own. We too need respite from the responsibility of caring for a helpless fellow being.

It is small wonder that her instincts bring her to admire a bird. And a bird which not only can fly, but talk as well! The raven which called her into the seed store keeps us focused upon that one point of concentration, Mrs. Farebrother's paralytic ambivalence, so that all seemingly independent strands of thought or conversation are ultimately seen as a careful release from this single spool.

The woman first speaks of desire: she would like a bird, a raven. As she describes to her paraplegic husband the events which led up to that desire, she remembers her former attraction to a boy who was called the raven, and that the bird talks of someone who is dead. Both thoughts are seen to be repetitions of her nighttime speculations. In the dark, in her need, she can safely wish Vergil dead, but during the daylight hours, when such thoughts have scurried to their hiding place, she must sheathe herself in solicitous redress. This has been her life's condition since Vergil's release from the hospital long before.

The raven, this raven, is a perfect solution. It would amuse her husband, she hopes, and signify the achievement of a mutual desire; both will have decided to have the bird. But there is more to be profited, which is known to us by implication. The bird's presence would give brazen, corporeal expression to her more timid, ambivalent thoughts. Vergil's refusal to accept any responsibility for the pet, however, eliminates all possibility of their ever sharing a desire again. The story ends with this realization, and both continue to manipulate their wheelchairs.

For the reader, having sympathized with Mrs. Farebrother, there is a recognition that her love-hate is an exaggeration of something familiar.

Also familiar is the situation in the title story, "Color of Darkness," which concludes uncomfortably, like a long unfulfilled desire nakedly exposed. The faintly dreamlike quality which suffuses this story may be attributed to the pensive nature of the father who is preoccu-

pied with the exploration of his identity. He is out of touch with the people around him and is the victim of his inappropriate responses to them. Purdy designates him "the father" which is a most suitable epithet in its paradoxical implications. He is, indeed, the actual father of the boy, Baxter, for which he will be punished, but he has long ago delegated his parental responsibilities to his housekeeper—"mother," Mrs. Zilke. It is she who at the conclusion of the story has learned with the reader that the boy is already corrupted, that he knows the ways of the world and is a sinister member of the community. From its hiding place within the half truth of love and affection expressed in the boy's snuggling close and suddenly and surprisingly kissing his father, leaps forth the other half to complete the truth, his protestations of hate, culminating with a kick in the groin and an obscene word for that same bewildered father. Baxter allows himself to expose his ambivalence because his father is weak. In human beings, Purdy seems to recognize, there is an animal aversion to weakness and sickness which leads to brutality.

Most of us handle our ambivalence more gracefully, but we must recognize that an intensification of the circumstances which evoke such unwelcome feelings could weaken our check on their manifestations. So Purdy has intensified and exaggerated to denote a truth, and the reader must identify his own property.

But in the novella "63: Dream Palace" and in the story "Why Can't They Tell You Why?" the truth that Purdy overstates remains hidden in the exaggeration. It is hidden because the distortion allows us to deny its relevance to ourselves. What have we to do with a boy who murders the brother he loves in an abandoned house, or with a mother who drives her son into a hysterical state, apparently beyond recall? We may sense the horror of it, the disgust of it, but those "abnormalities" are the acts of distant rel-

atives. There is for us here a saving aura of unreality; a third person; a dreamlike quality through which we may escape our responsibility of recognition.

The novella's exposition would have us believe that Fenton Riddleway, a boy who is possessed of what Freud calls brutal egotism, is extremely important to the interlocutors, Grainger and Parkheast. Their intimacy and boredom, conveyed to us by what feebly attempts to pass for provocative conversation, suggest that the boy is the subject of frequent discussion and considerable thought. The story's energy is dispersed among the lives of Parkheast, Grainger, and Fenton, settling finally on the Fenton fragment.

The boy has neither charm nor grace; he demonstrates no wit, nor is he particularly intelligent. His interests are personal, and his learning understandably little. In fact, the most interesting thing about him is the situation in which he finds himself. He is unfamiliar with the city in which he is stranded and is waiting for someone to guide him from the abandoned house to which he was directed. His ability to fascinate seems locked with him within the story, and the reader must accept Fenton, if he will, as the protagonist of a homosexual day-dream. But Fenton fails to make us dream. He is inordinately cruel to his brother Claire, and he abuses everyone

whose interest in him indicates a weakness. Those who are willing to indulge his predatory nature resemble some flat-toothed creatures who happily embrace the beautiful tiger. Physical beauty is the quality which Fenton possesses, and those who meet him once may never recover from the encounter.

The novella insists that the handsome boy brings havoc to all who seek him out; and this we see him do. But why he is so sought, so valuable a possession, cannot be understood easily. The victims' willingness, therefore, to be oppressed, and to share oppression with their friends—Parkheast brings the tormentor to Grainger and Bruno brings him to Hayden—seems to be an indulgence in homosexual fantasy. This, however, is not the nightmare of a Kafka story which well might be the daylight experience of a nighttime adventure; it is more as though the reader were eavesdropping on someone else's fantasy. The novella fails to ensnare us, finally, because Fenton fails to charm without being seen. It is impossible to believe casual reports of a Medusa.

A collection of eleven short stories and a novella, however, is no mean first step for a writer, and if his foot comes down shakily sometimes, that fact does not blur some of the fine, clear prints.

THE COMPLAINT: OR, NIGHT THOUGHTS

Type of work: Philosophical poetry
Author: Edward Young (1683-1765)
First published: 1742-1745

Night Thoughts, as it is best known, belongs to the long and rich tradition of Graveyard Poetry which received some of its original impulses or boosts through Sir Richard Steele's *Tatler* Number 89 and Milton's *Il Penseroso*. Steele affirmed that the "proper Delight of Men of Knowledge and Virtue" is "that calm and elegant satisfaction which the vulgar call Melancholy." Milton had agreed, hailing

"divinest Melancholy," "whose saintly visage" is "O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue." Enough such mortuary poems and prose works existed in the eighteenth century to fill a coffin. The most notable was perhaps Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, written during the years of completion of Young's masterpiece, with its organ-like roll of gloom and sadness.

All such poems begin in gloom and pity, feed the pose with assumed personal feeling, and subsequently delight in the feeling for its own sake, though ostensibly the purpose is the edification of the soul and spirit.

Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* was one of the most popular early examples of this school of poetry. His subject was "life, death, and immortality," as was that of most other such writers. This *memento mori*, with its near-static concentration on death and dissolution, Young felt to be his masterpiece, and though his reputation was slow in growing, once started as a result of the poem, it continued for a hundred years, mistakenly placing him as one of the great poets in the tradition.

The poem is somewhat autobiographical, such facts being embroidered as theology and purpose, and fecund imagination, suggested and demanded. Young's first wife, Lady Elizabeth Lee, had died in 1740. The daughter of Lady Elizabeth, the Narcissa of the poem, had died earlier, in 1736, and her husband, the Philander of the poem, had died in 1740. The obvious moral lesson to be drawn from the deaths of these people is strengthened by the introduction of a non-autobiographical character named Lorenzo, a "silken son of pleasure," whose "fond heart dances while the siren sings."

The nine "Nights" or Books vary little. The subject is the imminence of death, especially of the young, beautiful, and virtuous, and the triumph over it through Christianity. Young had a Puritanical dislike for wealth and debauchery, and a strong feeling about the dignity, nobility, and importance of man.

This poem is remarkably loose and rambling, even for this type of work. Young could not discipline his imagination, as his comments reveal: "My busy mind perpetually suggests new things; my heart knows not how to refrain from pursuing them. The volume grows upon my hands, till its bulk would defeat its

end; new rays of thought dart in upon me, which, like cross lights, confound and perplex each other." He planned his poem as the opposite of most such works. Instead of using much narrative and tying his moralizings to the story, he uses only brief narrative and, as he said, "the morality arising from it makes the bulk of the poem." The author could not control his moral reflections.

The result is a poem in which the same thoughts are said over and over. There are, after all, only so many ways a poet can comment on "Life, Death, and Immortality" when there is little action. The consequence is a kind of infatuation with words for their own sake, with reflections which are unduly repetitious, with wordiness and dullness. He says, for example, that man is superb: "How wonderful, is man." Then repeats himself sixteen lines later: "O what a miracle to man is man." There are numerous other instances of repeated ideas.

Within the style, however, there are strengths. Young's fondness for words, for cello-like constructions which roll from the pen and tongue, create some striking sentences. He is especially noteworthy for his apothegms, for his philosophical truisms, which, though they might seem to state more than they actually say, were impressive in his time and are noteworthy even today. Such, for example, are the statements: "Procrastination is the thief of time," the unoriginal but sententious "Life is war," and "Today is yesterday returned."

The value or weakness of the poem must, however, rest on its message, its "philosophy" and theological musings and statements. Generated in hatred of pomp and circumstance, in human presumption, and driven by man's common lot on earth, the poem sweeps across man's common lot and common fate, concentrating on the miracle and the misery, the hope and the hopelessness of man. Man is "poor," "rich," "abject," "august," "complicated," and "wonderful." Yet God is infinitely more wonderful,

who made man such. The author trembles at the fact that man is both wormlike and godlike. Yet nature insists that the worm shall rise beyond the grave, "night proclaims [the] soul immortal." Though "all on earth is shadow, all beyond / Is substance." Though the earth is shaky and trembling. Heaven is "solid" and unchanging.

Young dwells on and catalogues man's woes: "War, famine, pest, volcano, storm, and fire,/Intestine broils," and such cataloguing, in him as in other poets, reveals and contains much of his weakness. But it sets the stage for the full coverage of his subject. It is mankind, beset by these troubles, mankind in general, that the poet is concerned with. He mourns for the many millions and for their "common lot," the "throes on all of woman born."

The first book outlines the author's general approach, his reflections on life's vicissitudes and his hopes, including an effective prayer to the deity who "put to flight/Primeval silence." The next seven books are addressed to the "silken son of pleasure" Lorenzo, the infidel, whose thoughts and actions will reap him eternal damnation. Young reflects often on the reasons for the infidel's attitude. In

the preface to Book VI he conjectures that probably such people are "supported in their deplorable error by some doubt of their immortality." He is encouraged in his hope for their eventual salvation by the feeling that "men once thoroughly convinced of their immortality are not far from being Christians."

Book IX, entitled "The Consolation," ends the poem in a vision of the last day, of eternity, and of the wonder of God's creation and plan. This book rises to a rhapsody of hope and affirmation of man's ultimate triumph that is effective. Night is banished; there is no more darkness. "Joy breaks; shines; triumphs; 'tis eternal day." Though the soul has experienced a few evils, can it, a worm, a nothing, complain? The soul blends "the two supports of human happiness": "True taste of life, and constant thought of death!" And "universal midnight! reigns."

For the modern reader this poem is undoubtedly too morbid, too macabre, too static. Its great popularity fed on the contemporary taste for such morbidity. The importance of the poem rests more on its historical interest as an example of the graveyard school of poetry than on its intrinsic value as a work of art.

CONCERNING ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

Type of work: Biography

Author: Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (c. 70-c. 140)

First transcribed: 106-113

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus was a friend of Pliny the Younger, many of whose letters were addressed to him. He was an attorney of note, and he served for a time (117-138) as private secretary to the Emperor Hadrian. It was in this position that he found available to him much information denied to other Roman historians and biographers. Suetonius was considered one of the most learned men of his age, and he wrote a number of books. Among them were such volumes

as *Famous Courtesans*, *The Kings*, *Public Offices*, *Rome*, *Greek Games*, *Cicero's 'De Republica'*, *Greek Abusive Terms*. None of these works has survived. In fact, only two of his works have come down to us: the virtually complete *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (*De vita Caesarum*) and the fragmentary and far less famous *Concerning Illustrious Men* (*De viris illustribus*), which was probably Suetonius' first published work.

Concerning Illustrious Men, in its

original and complete form, was a biographical study of Romans who had been important in literature and literary and language studies down to the reign of the Emperor Domitian. It was made up of five sections devoted respectively to Poets, Orators, Historians, Philosophers, and Grammarians and Rhetoricians—by “grammarians” was meant teachers of literature; “rhetoricians” meant teachers of oratory. The parts of *Concerning Illustrious Men* that have survived did not come down to us in a group; this circumstance has contributed to the corrupt and fragmentary condition of the texts. What remains of the section on “Grammarians and Rhetoricians” (our most extensive fragment) was found in the mid-fifteenth century in a manuscript of some of the works of the historian Tacitus. The other parts of *Concerning Illustrious Men* that survived were abstracted from unrelated manuscripts and works in which Suetonius is quoted. The section on “Poets,” which we know from references in an ancient writer’s work, originally contained at least thirty-three lives. Parts of six of these remain. Suetonius’ *Life of Terence* was preserved in the *Commentary* of the fourth century grammarian, Aelius Donatus, as were the “Lives” of Horace, Lucan, Vergil, Tibullus, and Persius. Some of these “Lives” have obviously been drastically abridged, and we have no way of knowing how much of what we have was actually written by Suetonius, or, in fact, if all of them actually were written by him in the first place.

The section on “Orators” is represented in modern editions of Suetonius only by a brief abstract of the *Life of Passienus Crispus* (fl. A.D. 50). We know that at least fourteen other orators were treated in the original publication. From the section on “Historians,” only the life of Pliny the Elder remains; we know the names of five other men who were also Suetonius’ subjects. From the section on “Philosophers,” we have only a list of three of the men whom Suetonius

wrote about: Marcus Terentius Varro, Publius Nigidius Figulus, and Lucius Annaeus Seneca.

Concerning Illustrious Men begins with the section on “Grammarians and Rhetoricians.” The section opens with a brief history of the study of grammar, that is, literary studies, in Rome up to the middle of the second century B.C. At first, grammar was not studied at all and was little esteemed. The earliest teachers, who were both poets and Italian Greeks, interpreted only Greek poetry or gave readings from their own Latin writings. The real beginning of grammatical studies in Rome is attributed, by Suetonius, to an accident that occurred to a Greek ambassador visiting Rome between the second and third Punic wars, about 168 B.C. This was close to the time of the death of Ennius, the first important Roman poet. Crates of Mallos, in Rome to confer with the Senate, broke his leg by falling into an open sewer. During his convalescence, as before his accident, the Greek organized many gatherings at which poetry was read and was considered critically. These sessions set a fashion and an example for the Roman literary set, and soon the works of Roman poets, who had circulated their poems privately, were made known in many public readings. Literary conversation and study grew in popularity and soon became established in Rome and the provinces.

It should be noticed, says Suetonius, that although “grammarian,” the Greek term for teacher of literature, was to become prevalent, the Latin term “literati” was at first the most widely used. Also, in the early days, grammarians taught both literature and rhetoric; but this practice soon faded out as scholars began to specialize, grammarians being concerned with language and literary culture and rhetoricians being concerned with the training of effective speakers and, thus, lawyers and politicians. Suetonius, after his general introduction, goes on to give brief and deft anecdotal biographical

sketches of Rome's nineteen most distinguished teachers of literature.

On turning to his consideration of Roman rhetoricians, Suetonius again gives a brief historical survey of the field. Rhetorical studies were begun in Rome in about the same way and about the same time as grammatical studies. At first the Senate was actively opposed to this Greek innovation and passed laws forbidding philosophers and rhetoricians to live in Rome. Resolutions were passed condemning Latin rhetoricians and the young men who spend "whole days in idleness" at their schools. But little by little rhetoric became visibly useful and thus honorable. Then, after describing the several methods of instruction current among the rhetoricians, Suetonius gives biographical sketches of eight notable rhetoricians. The other "Lives" originally attached to this section are lost.

Of the six "Lives" remaining to us from the section on the "Poets," those of Terence and Vergil are relatively long and seem reasonably complete. The "Lives" of Horace and Persius are substantial enough, but are evidently somewhat abridged; the "Lives" of Tibullus and Lucan are mere fragments. The "Life" of Terence is interesting for its own sake and for the insight it gives into the early development of the Roman theater and the brilliant circle of Scipio Africanus and Gaius Laelius. Also, it is interesting to note that Terence's plays

were thought too good to be written by a slave and that a controversy arose in which it was claimed by some that Terence's aristocratic friends actually wrote the comedies.

The "Life" of Vergil, however, is the premier selection in *Concerning Illustrious Men*. Suetonius, apparently, had a great deal of material to draw from (his access to the Imperial archives undoubtedly helped him a great deal), and he furnishes us with both a good psychological portrait of Vergil and much intimate detail concerning the poet's relationship with the Imperial court of Augustus. Vergil, it seems, was a gentle, virtuous, precise, and much venerated man. His long struggle to write the *Aeneid* and his literary life in general are commented upon at length.

The "Life" of Horace presents the man much as his poetry does: a modest, quietly epicurean personality who judiciously sought the pleasant life and a certain practical wisdom. The "Life" of Persius emphasizes that prematurely dead young poet's great purity and disinterested virtue, and the fragment on Lucan gives us a good insight into that not entirely wise young poet's personality. The paragraph on Tibullus is merely a short notice of the poet's birth, activity, and death. *Concerning Illustrious Men* concludes with long paragraphs on the historian Pliny the Elder and the orator Passienus Crispus.

THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK

Type of work: Drama

Author: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Time: The present

Locale: London, England

First presented: 1953

Principal characters:

EGGERSON, the retiring confidential clerk

SIR CLAUDE MULHAMMER, a successful financier

ELIZABETH MULHAMMER, his wife

COLBY SIMPSON, the new confidential clerk

LUCASTA ANGEL, one of Sir Claude's illegitimate offspring

B. KAGHAN, Lucasta's fiancé and Lady Elizabeth's son

MRS. GUZZARD, Colby's mother

Readers who know something about T. S. Eliot's poems and not much about his plays may not have found in the poems that immediacy or simplicity of thought, imagery, and style which alone can please them. Some may have avoided the plays on that account. If so, they have been in error, for Eliot appeared aware of the importance of being intelligible to the listening audience in the theater. There is no time, and he knew it, for ingenious metaphysical images when the objective is to create dramatically and poetically a significant semblance of life. The plays, then, and this one in particular, have a clean poetic character which makes them swift-moving and understandable.

It does not follow from this that *The Confidential Clerk* is without depth or poetic value. The depth is where it ought to be, not on the surface and not in a complexity of language, but underneath, a matter of feeling and reflection, dramatically enforced. The play is poetic in the best sense: an abstract idea, not wholly communicable in descriptive language, is expressed by means of characters and situations which are partly illustrative and partly symbolic. Seven characters of various sorts, moving without complete self-understanding in their individual orbits, are presented as parts of a creatively controlled universe of conversation. The retiring confidential clerk, Eggerson, himself satisfied with the way of life he has chosen, unifies the action and brings the other characters, or sees them brought, to something of the same sort of adjustment to life.

The language is poetic, but not as in Eliot's nondramatic verse. Here the poetry is controlled by an interest in making everything clear and in making that clarity emotionally important, suggestive of ideas and feelings which even clear language cannot express. Perhaps the main poetic value of the dialogue is in its rhythmical force. There is nothing obvious about that rhythm; it is not metered, but free. Nevertheless, it is wholly satis-

fying, it fits the conditions of the stage, and it moves the reader swiftly and deeply.

Sir Claude Mulhammer is revealed at the outset discussing with his former confidential clerk, Eggerson, the probable response of Sir Claude's wife, Elizabeth, to Colby Simpson, the new confidential clerk. It is not simply a question of justifying a change to a woman who has respected Eggerson's ability and character; it is a question of determining how best to win her to Colby's side without letting her know that Colby is Sir Claude's illegitimate son. Sir Claude's idea is to maneuver Elizabeth into the position of wanting to adopt Colby. Thus, when Eggerson asks him whether he will let Elizabeth know that Colby is Claude's son, Claude answers that he does not know what his wife's reaction will be. There is always something we never know about people, he adds, so that often when we think we understand them well, we are completely mistaken about them.

The problem for the people in the play is not simply that of understanding the persons about them, although such understanding is as important as it is difficult; it is the problem of having the characters know themselves. Each is somewhat self-deluded, with the possible exception of Eggerson, and the discovery of that self-delusion is made difficult because each of these persons is intelligent, realistic, and willing to limit ambition if ambition has outstripped ability.

Sir Claude is a successful financier who has always wished to be a potter. Having recognized his inability to be a great potter—that is, to create works of art which will move others in the same profound and indescribable way that he is moved—he restricts his pottery-making to a solitary room beyond the observations of others. The possibility that it might be better for him to make his poor pots openly does not occur to him; he is too candid in his self-appraisal to believe that he might be mistaken in his humility. His fault is in wanting his son Colby to

be like him; and it is understandable that he should have this fault, for Colby is—not a disappointed potter—but a disappointed organist. Colby has recognized his limitations, too, and he also confines his playing to a solitary room in order that he may imagine there the music that others would not hear even if they were listening.

These solitary pursuits of personal ambitions which cannot publicly be enjoyed are discussed as retreats to “secret gardens.” Lucasta Angel, another of Claude’s illegitimate offspring, but by a different mother, says to Colby that difficult as it may be for a man to give up a career on which he has set his heart, he loses only the outer world in so doing; he still has his inner world, his private, hidden “garden.”

Lucasta believes that she has no garden; she depresses herself with memories of a shabby mother and the grubby part of London where she lived. But Colby tells her that her garden exists somewhere, created by her own desire.

Eliot carries his audience along by means of a series of discoveries to the knowledge that Lucasta’s fiancé, B. Kaghan, is Lady Elizabeth’s son—thus destroying her hope that Colby is her son and not Claude’s—that Claude’s son, presumably in the care of a Mrs. Guzzard, died at birth, and that Mrs. Guzzard substituted her own son for Claude’s. Colby, then, is Mrs. Guzzard’s son, belonging to neither Claude nor Elizabeth. Since Colby finds that he is the son of a disappointed musician, now dead, he is freed from the compulsion to be like Claude, and he is able to build a new character to replace the ambitious

one that could not be great. Colby settles for a minor goal, but for one closer to his heart, and he resolves to be an organist in a small parish church.

Each of the characters, except Egger-son, then realizes the extent to which the conception of Colby and of themselves had been falsely determined by their wishes. The resolution of the play, both in content and manner, reminds one of *Oedipus Rex*, and Eliot wisely takes advantage of the classic aura his play enjoys. Yet his play is not merely a modernized Greek tragedy; it is something more in thought and style; and, above all, it is not a tragedy. True, the characters come to the soul-changing point of discovery. Although Oedipus blinded and exiled himself as the result of self-knowledge, he did so for dynastic as well as moral reasons. The crime in *The Confidential Clerk* is not incest or intellectual pride, but self-delusion and self-limitation; and the discovery of these latter crimes, as modern as they are ancient, leads not to self-exile or suicide, but to self-reformation. Each goes to his own garden, although the garden need no longer be kept secret. (Incidentally, it is significant to realize that Egger-son’s garden is neither secret nor metaphorical; he wanted to be a confidential clerk, he was able to be a confidential clerk, and his garden yields real vegetables.)

It is a pleasure to read a play that is clear on the surface, poetically finished, and morally pertinent to any time. In the season of its presentation *The Confidential Clerk* provided evidence in support of the claim that Eliot’s Nobel Prize was richly deserved.

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE RICH

Type of work: Novel

Author: C. P. Snow (1905-)

Time: 1927-1936

Locale: London and the nearby countryside

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

LEWIS ELIOT, a barrister, the narrator and protagonist of the *Strangers and Brothers* series

CHARLES MARCH, a member of a wealthy Anglo-Jewish banking family

LEONARD MARCH, his retired father, called "Mr. L."

SIR PHILIP MARCH, Leonard March's older brother and the head of the March family

KATHERINE MARCH GETLIFFE, Leonard March's daughter

FRANCIS GETLIFFE, her husband, a Cambridge physicist

ANN SIMON MARCH, Charles' wife, an active Communist

HERBERT GETLIFFE, Francis' much older half brother, a lawyer, involved in unethical transactions

RONALD PORSON, an embittered failure despite great gifts, in love with Ann Simon

HUMPHREY SEYMOUR, the editor of *Note*, a Communist scandal sheet

Lewis Eliot, the narrator of C. P. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* series, struggles throughout his early years up the ladders of power and influence; in *The Conscience of the Rich*, he comes into contact with the Marches, a family long at or near the pinnacle of prestige, and in them he observes the way in which changing conditions have altered the meaning of being rich and powerful in the years between two world wars. Specifically, he observes the clash between two generations of Marches, an older generation to whom wealth and influence come naturally, and a younger generation for whom being wealthy and benevolent is not enough but is, at times, something to be ashamed of.

The Marches are one of the great Anglo-Jewish banking families; the history of their rise and partial decline is part of the history of wealth and wealthiness in England. During the years from 1880 to 1914, a great time for the making and accumulation of wealth, the Marches had grown steadily in importance after their ancestors migrated to England from Holland and opened a bank in London. Those were also years of nearly full freedom for English Jews: the Marches took seats in Parliament, owned strings of race horses, befriended the arts, voted Conservative, went to Oxford and Cambridge; they remained, however, members of a tightly knit circle of English Jews, among whom they married and socialized.

Their power was considerable, measur-

able in society and politics in terms of money. But international finance was, even then, becoming a vastly complicated business; the time had passed in which a private loan to a South American government was significant. The Marches, though richer than ever, were already becoming anachronistic in the 1890's when they had to choose between taking non-family members into the bank or selling it. They sold the bank.

Thus, the influence of the older generation of Marches, who were wealthy in the best years for men to be wealthy, is beginning to wane. A major source of conflict is the fact that they do not recognize the changes of the post-World War I years and the new kinds of responsibilities inherited by their children. The background of the novel is a drastic change in the world; the focus is on those most affected by the change, a rich family; and, somewhat ironically, the story is chronicled by someone gaining the kinds of influence congruent with the changing world, kinds that do not rest primarily on wealth.

At the center of the March family in the 1920's are Sir Philip, a Cabinet Minister, and his younger brother Leonard, familiarly called "Mr. L.," both about seventy, both vigorous. The hopes for the next generation of Marches rest solely on Charles, Mr. L.'s son, and a close friend of Lewis Eliot. Charles is headed toward an outstanding, perhaps brilliant career in law; much of the novel centers on the

conflicts leading to and generated by Charles' decision to give up the law and become a physician.

The reason for his decision and the gravity of its consequences are identical: the bar, to him, represents the community of wealthy and influential Jews, and this is the community from which he is trying to escape.

Mr. March cannot accept Charles' refusal to be tagged as a bright, rich Jew; Charles cannot accept the tag. About the same time Katherine, Charles' younger sister, falls in love with and eventually marries Francis Getliffe, a young Cambridge physicist and a Gentile. Although Mr. March finally accepts Katherine's defection, he cannot accept Charles' more crucial one: Charles' decision is a blow to the heart of Mr. March's existence, to the strong family ties, the involvement in affairs, the strongly patriarchal tradition of the great house. It is clear enough that C. P. Snow sees the conflict as inevitable, the result of those same historical forces that first brought the March family into prominence and opened a place for the Jews in English social and political life. The Marches thrived under conditions produced by forces ultimately destructive to valuable traditions; a generation later, the same forces are destroying the traditions established by the March family. Wealth *per se* and the old family customs have both come to mean less. Charles must adapt to these new conditions. Mr. March must cling to the old ways, the more so for their being archaic.

When Charles persists in his plan of becoming a doctor, and further complicates matters by deciding to marry Ann Simon, who, though Jewish, is from a social class much lower than that of the Marches, Mr. March withdraws his commitment to make Charles independently wealthy.

Following the marriages of Charles and Katherine, in 1929, there is a break of some seven years in the narration. In 1936, Philip March has the same Parliamentary secretaryship he had held briefly

before, and a scandal that had threatened to break then is once again in the air. The scandal concerns an investment Sir Philip made in a company doing business with his ministry. Mr. March asks Lewis Eliot for help, first because Eliot has worked for Herbert Getliffe, a half brother of Katherine's husband, who was doing legal work for Sir Philip's ministry at the time of the stock sale, and second because Lewis, unlike Mr. March, still maintains contact with Charles. This relationship is in turn important because Charles' wife Ann, an active Communist, knows of the stock transaction and is being urged to use it to discredit the Conservative government in power at the time. It is clear, and Ann knows the truth, that Sir Philip is guilty of nothing and that the only shady dealings were those made by Herbert Getliffe. She is, however, considering releasing damaging information simply in hopes of discrediting the government.

Lewis, sent to dissuade her, appears to succeed, at least to the point that, during an almost fatal illness, Ann gives him information which if Charles decides to release it, will not only stop the scandal but also put her paper, the *Note*, out of business. Charles, however, decides not to use the knowledge he has gained. *Note* publishes the information, and Sir Philip, as a scapegoat, is asked to resign. Mr. March completely disinherits Charles, who, though he could have stopped Ann, has refused to do so because he was incapable of using his love as a lever.

This, for all intents and purposes, is the end of the Marches as a great family. But Snow—and this fact explains much of his strategy in the novel—is interested in the Marches more as types than as individuals; he is more concerned with the ending of an era than in the personal downfall of his characters. Hence, much of the novel is devoted to sketching that family as an example of a class, one that is ceasing to exist. Much of the book is devoted to neither character delineation nor plot development but rather to evoca-

tion of the way of life of the March family: to the Friday night institution of a great dinner at their house on Bryanston Square, to the anecdotes of Leonard March, to Charles March's reflections on what it means to be rich and Jewish, and, more than anything else, to Mr. March himself, the exemplar of the spirit of family and tradition. Mr. March, in fact, is the liveliest character in the novel. Snow is at his best in this novel, as in several of his others, when presenting a character whose individual qualities or eccentricities are shown by means bordering on caricature. Given the aim of the novel, this method is artistically justifiable.

This aim is consonant with the plan of

the whole *Strangers and Brothers* sequence. Lewis Eliot is on the way up. He is far from a simple man; his feelings often take him off ambition's path; his road to the top is not at all straight. But the centers of power are still his chief interest, and getting near them is his main goal. The Marches are the symbol of what was once the top. Their story, as related in the novel, brings home the fact that there have been a great many changes in the terrain Eliot wants to conquer. The Marches are still rich and still a great family, but they are no longer truly powerful. Sentiment and the aura of wealth and tradition draw Lewis to the family. But, he recognizes, his road to power will take him elsewhere.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Type of work: History

Author: Madame de Staël (1766-1817)

Time: 1770-1815

Locale: France, Switzerland, Germany, England

First published: 1818

Principal personages:

MADAME DE STAËL

BARON ERIC MAGNUS STAËL VON HOLSTEIN, her first husband

JACQUES NECKER, French Minister of Finance, her father

LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE

LOUIS XV

LOUIS XVI

MARIE ANTOINETTE, Queen of France

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

MIRABEAU

ROBESPIERRE

TALLEYRAND

BENJAMIN CONSTANT DE REBECQUE, French statesman

LOUIS DE NARBONNE, father of one of Madame de Staël's sons

ALBERT JEAN MICHEL ROCCA, Madame de Staël's second husband

Few people have had a better viewpoint during a period of violence than Anne Louise Germaine Necker during the French Revolution. The daughter of the financier and statesman, Jacques Necker, and the wife of the Swedish Ambassador Baron Eric Magnus Staël von Holstein, she observed her father's efforts to save France from the financial crisis he

saw coming to overturn his country. She also watched the early phases of the Revolution, the storming of the Bastille, and the cruelty practiced against French nobility in the name of liberty. Only because of her ambassadorial status did she live through the Reign of Terror.

Later she clashed with Napoleon. Exiled by him from France, she barely es-

caped from his army marching on Moscow. She witnessed his triumphs and his abdications. Writing about it all, she put into her account of these historical events the wit and charm that made her one of the best conversationalists of her day.

Swarthy of complexion, with thick lips and a prominent nose, noteworthy for her bad taste in clothes, and—judged by her portrait by the artist François Gérard—dumpy and anything but pretty, Madame de Staël held a position at the center of the European stage, at the summit of the political and intellectual elite. She was visited by Schlegel, Schiller, Byron, and Wellington. She had children by four men, only one of them her husband, and affairs with another half dozen of the important men of her time.

Besides a few frothy novels, and essays on phases of French literature, Madame de Staël was the author of *Germany*, which introduced German Romanticism into French culture, and of the autobiographical *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, published posthumously. It was the Bible of French liberals during the Restoration.

Toward the end of her life, saddened by the death of her second son, Albert, the sickly Germaine Necker, Madame de Staël, began a patriotic essay to refute the idea that Louis XVI and the French regime overthrown by the Revolution were truly representative of French traditions. To her, the Revolution culminated a long struggle for liberty by the real France, the bourgeoisie or Third Estate, against the nobility and the clergy. Though held in check by centuries of oppression, the bourgeoisie had remained true to its traditional ideals. Madame de Staël takes pains to separate her defense of liberty from any apology for atrocities committed in liberty's name.

Though she admits at the beginning of her book that she has lived through what she considers one of the great eras of French history and has played her part in it, Madame de Staël announces her de-

termination to regard it as some period of ancient history about which she can write with impartiality. Except for an occasional outburst of emotion, she does indeed display indignation without hatred, and wrath without resentment.

Germaine Necker was the daughter of a wealthy, famous man, and was reared by a mother who followed the precepts of Rousseau's *Emile*. Having learned life through literature, the daughter, though acclaimed as an intelligent woman and a witty conversationalist, possessed little solid learning. But she, who could declare that the pursuit of politics was religion, morality, and poetry, all in one, was a keen observer and had abundant opportunity to learn.

Embarked on her theme of liberty, she begins her book with the statement that Greece and Rome fell because, despite the blessings of a free society for some, they enslaved the many. She comments on the backward state of most of Asia, the result of despotic control. The serfs of more recent civilizations represent a condition nearly as degraded. She considers their emancipation a necessary step in the world's climb to civilization.

To the author, an absolutist government is the worst political form, while a system that maintains an aristocracy is almost as intolerable in the eyes of the lower classes. To make her point, she reviews France's history during the eight centuries prior to the Revolution. At least every quarter century, some sort of social clash occurred: peasants against nobles, nobles against sovereigns, Protestants against Catholics, or Parliament against the Court, each struggle arising from resentment against arbitrary assumption of power.

Those who praise the beautiful edifices of Louis XIV, she remarks, forget that the despots of Egypt could erect even more spectacular structures, like the pyramids of Memphis, because of their supply of slave labor. Of the great writers of the Age of Louis XIV, the king persecuted more than he encouraged, and the

best did not appear until the end of his reign. His conquests and the expansion of French territory came at the expense of internal disorder. His subjects insulted his funeral procession, and the Parliament canceled his will.

However, this high-spirited woman does not confine her attention to a long-dead king. She continues her thesis by indicating how the weak character of Louis XV and the endless errors resulting from that character sparked a spirit of resentment that remained to trouble Louis XVI, despite his own scrupulous conscientiousness. Madame de Staël calls his wife, Marie Antoinette, "one of the most amiable and gracious persons who ever filled a throne."

This discussion brings her to the other purpose of her book, a filial vindication of the acts of the French Minister of Finance. Brought into the government in 1776 as head of the treasury by M. de Maurepas, Prime Minister of Louis XVI, Jacques Necker was in and out of power for the next fifteen years, resigning when his suggestions were disregarded, and being reappointed by demand of the populace. He advocated the establishment of provincial assemblies, taxation for everyone, and noninvolvement in the struggle between England and her rebellious American colonies.

Most people today do not even remember the name of Jacques Necker. To such, the chief interest of this book will be the sections concerning the French Revolution and the enmity between Madame de Staël and Napoleon Bonaparte. However, it should be remembered that a warning from her probably saved Napoleon from assassination in Elba.

In 1786, Germaine married a Swedish nobleman, Eric Magnus Staël von Holstein, an opportunist whose quick thinking and loud voice helped make Gustavus III absolute monarch of Sweden in 1772. Eric obtained an assignment to Paris. There he cleverly arranged a marriage to Germaine contingent upon his appointment as Ambassador to France, with the

post likewise contingent upon the marriage. He achieved both at the age of thirty-seven, seventeen years older than his wife. The marriage brought him wealth and Germaine an established position and a complaisant husband. Their only child, a daughter, died at the age of two.

In those troubled times, Madame de Staël's status gave her a measure of security. It also permitted her to sit in the gallery on May 5, 1789, at the meeting of the States General to act on demands of the Third Estate for more power. Her influence enabled her to save some of the nobles. By flirting with one of the committee, she escaped with her own life, to describe from a distance the trial of Louis XVI and, eventually, the fall of Robespierre.

The second part of the book is largely devoted to Madame de Staël's relationship with Napoleon. She makes evident her opinion of him speaking bluntly of his egotism and his attempts to impose his will on Europe. A lover of literature herself, she sneers at his self-given title "Member of the National Institute." She portrays him as dextrous in the art of dazzling multitudes and of corrupting individuals. She cites the external pressures, like French fear of the Jacobins, that let him assume power. From personal observation she describes the Revolt of the 18th Brumaire on November 9, 1799, and the establishment of the Consular Constitution, as well as the steps by which Napoleon attained supreme power.

Madame de Staël does not hide the personal and political reasons that made them enemies. The first man of France could not abide one who would be the country's first woman. He tolerated no greatness but his own. She calls Napoleon's love of glory "ambition;" he called hers "meddling." Both of them hated being objects of mockery but both were masters at using it, frequently against each other. Their difference lay in the way she appealed to men's virtues, while Napoleon appealed to their vanity and

greed. Another difference was that he had the power to exile his enemies.

The publication in 1802 of a political study by Germaine's father, then retired to his estate on Lake Geneva, angered Napoleon because of its statements about him and the prediction of his downfall. Falsely accusing Germaine of providing M. Necker with information, Napoleon banned her again in 1803 as she had been exiled eight years earlier.

Her reaction was to hope she deserved the exile more on account of what she had done than because of her father's book. For twelve years she was not allowed to return to Paris. Her father and her husband were both dead, but she consoled herself by traveling to Weimar with a French statesman, Benjamin Constant, author of one of the earliest psychological novels, *Adolphe*. She says very little about him or about the other men with whom she was constantly involved.

From a distance she maintained her feud with Napoleon, charging him with profoundly changing the character of her countrymen. He taught them a love of luxury, she claimed, and an ability to dissemble; he ended the traditional French spirit of courtesy. Above all he caused retrogression in their literature.

During her exile from France, Madame de Staël also traveled to England, and her admiration for the English fills the last of the six divisions of her book. She sums up her opinion of them in one sentence: "The history of the political existence of England furnishes us with the

noblest monument of moral greatness ever achieved by mankind."

Napoleon's banishment permitted Madame de Staël to return to Paris in 1814, to find the city occupied by foreign armies. Now she could see and describe the agonies of the first year of Restoration. She had definite ideas about proper steps to take, but before much could be accomplished, on March 6, 1815, Napoleon once more landed on the French coast. However, before their feud could be resumed, his second abdication came, on June 22, 1815, and with it her book ends.

This fifth section, and the first draft of an essay on English history and character, complete the work. They were written in 1816. Madame de Staël's illness prevented revision, and the manuscript was left incomplete at her death. Two people worked to put it into publishable form: her oldest surviving son, Auguste Louis de Staël, and her son-in-law, Achille Charles Léonce Victor, Duc de Broglie, the husband of her only daughter Albertine. It was published in 1818. Probably these two men were also responsible for the anonymous English translation of that same year, published in both London and New York. *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* never had the literary influence of Madame de Staël's *Germany*, but even today it is worth some study for the insight it gives to one of the most important women of that era.

CONVERSATIONS OF GOETHE WITH ECKERMANN AND SORET

Type of work: Diary

Author: Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854)

Time: 1823-1832

Locale: Weimar, Germany

First published: 1836 and 1848

Principal characters:

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

JOHANN PETER ECKERMANN

FRÉDÉRIC SORET

There is no doubt that Goethe must be classified as the outstanding genius of German literature. The question remains which of his works is the most important one. For some readers it is *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*William Meister's Apprenticeship*), the prototype of the educational novel or *Bildungsroman*. For others it is *Faust*, the perennial favorite of German theater audiences. But many Goethe scholars usually place the *Conversations with Eckermann* close to the top of the list. It seems that the absence of any requirement for literary form permits a greater appreciation of the universal knowledge which Goethe possessed. It is said also that Goethe was the only man of his time who was able to absorb the major part of knowledge which was then known to mankind. The power of a truly informed man, one gifted with unusual creative abilities, is demonstrated in these conversations. Thus the literary world is grateful to the efforts of Eckermann, who recorded these talks which cover the last ten years of Goethe's long life. Eckermann critics claim that he is attempting to dramatize everything, and that a few entries are fictitious. These objections may be true, since Eckermann worshiped his idol, and some of the entries were made fifteen years after the death of Goethe.

Still, Eckermann's conversations constitute the most complete record of the kind available. The shortcomings, obvious in any attempt to arrive at the true Goethe, were expressed by Goethe himself a few days before his death: "The best of our conviction cannot be put into words. Language is not adjusted to express everything." In 1836, Eckermann published the first two volumes of the work. A third volume appeared in 1848, in which he also used a manuscript by Frédéric Soret, another close friend of Goethe.

Goethe born in 1792, grew up in poverty. Until he was fourteen years old, he did not even know that the fine arts existed. An urge to draw resulted in some

fine sketches, which opened the door to a series of patrons. He also started to write poetry and sent some verses to Goethe, who responded with encouraging words. In 1823 he completed "Contributions to Poetry," and looked for a publisher who would be willing to pay him a reasonable price. He sent his work to Goethe with the intention of obtaining Goethe's recommendation to Herr von Cotta, a well-known publisher. To meet Goethe personally he started out on a strenuous journey by foot to Weimar. Here he became Goethe's private secretary, a post which gave him the unique chance of witnessing all of Goethe's social functions and provided many opportunities to talk with Goethe alone. Eckermann's love of poetry and his quest to gain a deeper insight into ". . . what holds the world together" (Goethe, *Faust*) qualified him as a worthy conversational partner. Eckermann himself, scholar enough to realize that it would be impossible to give a true perspective of Goethe, called his work simply "My Goethe." However, he never acted as a selector or censor in the course of his work. Even when he was of the opinion that Goethe sometimes contradicted himself, he did not attempt to establish an artificial "Goethe viewpoint." The result is a diary-styled compilation of notes which leave it to the reader to draw conclusions about the real meaning of Goethe's opinions and statements. The English translation by John Oxenford has the merit of having arranged the entries of the three volumes in chronological order, not the case in the original edition. The very first entry points to the large range of interest of Goethe, and gives us some idea about his appearance:

The conversation turned principally upon mineralogy, chemistry, and natural science. The phenomena of the polarization of light appeared to interest him particularly. He showed me various preparations, chiefly after his own designs, and expressed a wish to make some experiments with me. . . . His figure is still to be called handsome;

his forehead and eyes are extremely majestic. He is tall and well built, and so vigorous in appearance that one can scarcely comprehend how he has been able for some years to declare himself too old to enter into society, and to go to court.

It is not unusual to find Goethe discussing a Beethoven sonata, student songs, poetry, opera, or the translation of a Greek drama in one single conversation. Very early the reader also encounters Goethe as a man who has difficulty in adjusting to sickness. His abhorrence of sickness was to stay with him until the end.

The first entry by Eckermann himself on June 10, 1823, tells of Eckermann's meeting with Goethe:

He received me with great cordiality; and the impression he made on me was such, that I consider this day as one of the happiest in my life. . . . The interior of the house made a very pleasant impression upon me; without being showy, everything was extremely simple and noble.

Goethe gave Eckermann several small assignments, which Eckermann performed to his satisfaction, and this accomplishment led to an invitation to stay on as Goethe's secretary.

Goethe implored his young admirer to learn from the past:

Our errors were endured because we found no beaten path; but from him who comes later into the world more is required; he must not be seeking and blundering, but should use the instructions of the old ones to proceed at once on the right path. It is not enough to take steps which may some day lead to a goal; each step must be itself a goal and a step likewise.

Because Goethe considered Eckermann a true poet, he talked a great deal on the subject:

The world is so great and rich, and life so full of variety, that you can never want occasion for poems. But

they must all be occasional poems; that is to say, reality must give both impulse and material for their production. A particular case becomes universal and poetic by the very circumstance that it is treated by a poet. All my poems are occasional poems, suggested by real life, and having therein a firm foundation. I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air.

And again:

What can be more important than the subject, and what is all the science of art without it? All talent is wasted if the subject is unsuitable. It is because modern artists have no worthy subjects, that people are so hampered in all the art of modern times. From this cause we all suffer.

Needless to say, there are thousands of lines which could be classified as the quotable Goethe, as when he advised Eckermann to

hold fast by the present. Every situation—nay, every moment—is of infinite worth; for it is the representative of a whole eternity.

Goethe, a great admirer of English literature, was impressed by Shakespeare's dramatic creativity:

Shakespeare has already exhausted the whole of human nature in all its tendencies, in all its heights and depths, and that, in fact, there remains for him, the aftercomer, nothing more to do. And how could one get courage only to put pen to paper, if one were conscious in an earnest appreciating spirit, that such unfathomable and unattainable excellences were already in existence!

However, he gave his greatest praise to Lord Byron, with some reservations for Englishmen in general:

"Lord Byron . . . is to be regarded as a man, as an Englishman, and as a great genius. His good qualities belong chiefly to the man, his bad to the Englishman and the peer, his talent is incommensurable. . . . That which I

call invention, said he, I never saw in anyone in the world to a greater degree than in him. His manner of loosing a dramatic knot is always better than one would anticipate."

Frequently it is asserted that Goethe's judgment in later years was influenced by his ministerial position in Weimar. When he heard about the arrest of Béranger, he commented:

He is rightly served. . . . His late poems are really contrary to all order; and he has fully deserved punishment by his offenses against king, state, and peaceful citizenship.

Also, his evaluation of Napoleon may be the result of his aristocratic environment:

Napoleon was the man! Always enlightened, always clear and decided, and endowed at every hour with sufficient energy to carry into effect whatever he considered advantageous and necessary. His life was the stride of a demi-god, from battle to battle, and from victory to victory. It might well be said of him, that he was found in a state of continual enlightenment. On this account, his destiny was more brilliant than any the world had seen before him, or perhaps will ever see after him.

Revolutions were to him justifiable in some cases:

It is true that I could be no friend to the French Revolution; for its horrors were too near me, and shocked me daily and hourly, whilst its beneficial results were not then to be discovered. . . . But I was as little a friend to arbitrary rule. Indeed, I was perfectly convinced that a great revolution is never a fault of the people, but of the government. Revolutions are utterly impossible as long as governments are constantly just and constantly vigilant, so that they may anticipate them by improvements at the right time, and not hold out until they are forced to yield by the pressure from beneath.

It is not surprising that Goethe who had explored the natural sciences and the

complexities of life expressed a reserved attitude toward freedom:

If we grant freedom to man, there is an end to the omniscience of God; for if the Divinity knows how I shall act, I must act so perforce . . . it is not good to meddle with divine mysteries.

His religious beliefs were free from any dogmatic conclusions. Naturally, for a man who wrote in *Faust* one of the greatest dramas depicting the struggle between good and evil, religion was a much-discussed subject:

I believed in God and in Nature, and in the triumph of good over evil; but this was not enough for pious souls: I was also required to believe other points, which were opposed to the feeling of my soul for truth; besides, I did not see that these would be of the slightest service to me.

Sometimes he was impatient in discussing the ease with which people often treat matters of religion:

People treat it, as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise, they would not say the Lord God, the dear God, the good God. This expression becomes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name, to which no thought is attached whatever. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him.

He was equally impatient with immortality at one point:

This occupation with the ideas of immortality is for people of rank, and especially ladies, who have nothing to do. But an able man, who has something regular to do here, and must toil and struggle and produce day by day, leaves the future world to itself, and is active and useful in this. Thoughts about immortality are also good for

those who have not been very successful here.

When he reflected on his own age, however, he was ready to talk about the subject in different terms:

At the age of 75 one must, of course, think sometimes of death. But this thought never gives me the least uneasiness, for I am fully convinced that our spirit is a being of a nature quite indestructible, and that its activity continues from eternity to eternity. It is

like the sun, which seems to set only to our earthly eyes, but which in reality, never sets, but shines on unceasingly.

Goethe lived to the age of eighty-three. Until his death he tried to explore "what holds this world together." His last audible remark was: "More light." Eckermann remained his faithful secretary and eyewitness reporter until the end. He did not reach the age of Goethe but lived long enough to prepare his conversations" before his death in 1854.

THE CORNERSTONE

Type of work: Novel
Author: Zoé Oldenbourg (1916-)
Time: Early thirteenth century
Locale: France and the Holy Land
First published: 1953

Principal characters:

ANSIAU, the old lord of Linnières, a pilgrim to the Holy Land
LADY ALIS, his wife
HERBERT LE GROS, Ansiau's son and heir
DAME AELIS, his wife
HAGUENIER OF LINNIÈRES, Herbert's oldest son
EGLANTINE, Herbert's half sister and leman
ERNAUT, Herbert's bastard son
LADY MARIE DE MONGENAST, the object of Haguenier's chivalric love
AUBERI, Ansiau's young squire
RIQUET, a renegade monk, Ansiau's traveling companion
GAUCELM OF CASTANS, called Bertrand, another traveling companion

In the opening chapter of his great scholarly work, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Johan Huizinga suggested that life in the Middle Ages was characterized by striking contrasts between such things as suffering and joy, adversity and happiness, cruelty and pious tenderness—that in those times a childlike directness and absoluteness gave to everyday experience an innocence no longer extant in our day. This idea as expressed could easily stand as an epigraph to Zoé Oldenbourg's *The Cornerstone*, for few writers have introduced in better fashion than Huizinga the spirit of an innocent yet brutal age and no one, except the late Sigrid Undset, perhaps, has dramatized it more effectively than Mme. Oldenbourg does in this novel.

The Cornerstone is not so much a historical novel as a work of fiction in which medieval men and women live. This distinction is important. Nowadays what passes for the historical novel pretends to little more than a windy adventure story filled with bombast and derring-do or a record of bedroom escapades in fancy dress. Mme. Oldenbourg's book is the exception that justifies a literary form debased by most of her contemporaries. Her novel has all the qualities we expect of a story enclosing long perspectives of time and change and the mysteries of life and death.

Herself a brilliant medievalist, she has the ability to make the past of her thirteenth century world as real as any picture of the present. Although her people

live in an age of violence, superstition, and harsh asceticism, their experiences hold true to the passions and suffering of men in all ages. Her books do not fall into sections, one for story and another for richness of detail. Time passes over three generations of the Linnieres family. They grow up, fall in and out of love, and marry. They are forced into situations they have not foreseen; they are caught between lusts of the flesh and agonies of the spirit; they sin and do penance. They grow old; they die. The whole is realistically conveyed, not by dramatic scenes staged against a picturesque landscape, as in the old-fashioned historical novel, but out of thousands of small details that build up to an impression of the complex experience life really is. Time passes and men change. Without trying to show anything more than this, Mme. Oldenbourg re-creates her pictures of life in castle and cloister, in villages where peasants huddle in squalor and the darkness of their own minds, along the crusaders' route of march.

No small part of Mme. Oldenbourg's effectiveness is due to her insight into the mind and heart of medieval man. Her people come together, talk, or go about their intimate affairs, and in so doing they reveal themselves and their private concerns, loyalties, superstitions, hopes of heaven, and fears of hell. Nothing seems contrived or forced; situations arise as casually as they do in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or Boccaccio's stories. But everything adds up to the stir and spirit of an age. Life is harsh, disappointing, sad. Men seize at gaiety or happiness in the pageantry of a tournament, the rituals of a court of love, an illicit passion, the panoply and violence of war. But always, above everything else, Christian faith gives meaning and purpose to experience and guides man's quest for spiritual salvation. Through these matters Mme. Oldenbourg brings to life and motion the gentry and whole raggle-taggle of medieval society—knights and their ladies, crusaders, troubadours, wandering

scholars, holy pilgrims, serfs, priests, merchants, clerks, and beggars—in the days when Philip Augustus reigned in Paris and Pope Innocent III had summoned the chivalry of France to a new crusade against the Albigensian heretics of Provence and Toulouse.

In a novel so solid in construction, so varied in detail, certain comparisons are inevitable. There is something massive here, like the soaring bulk of a Gothic cathedral built in an age when man lived in daily intimacy with his God and his church became a powerful upsurge in buttressed masonry. In this connection, the title of Mme. Oldenbourg's book is of course symbolic, for Christian faith was the cornerstone on which rested the whole structure of the feudal period. Again, reading this novel is like inspecting at close hand a medieval tapestry in which every figure, leafy tree, and symbolic beast has been worked lovingly and with care, or like turning the pages of a beautifully limned Book of Hours, the figures of its decorative groupings a little stiff and archaic in their poses but believable and very human, with every face and gesture clear-cut and revealing.

Father, son, and grandson stand in the foreground of this landscape with figures. In his old age Ansiau de Linnieres, part of whose story was told in an earlier novel, *The World Is Not Enough*, turns over his fiefs in Champagne to his heir and sets out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order to win forgiveness for the sins of his rough life. A veteran of the Third Crusade, he hopes to see Jerusalem once more before he dies and to visit the grave of his oldest son, buried at Acre. His sight failing, he goes blind on the way and wanders through a countryside ravaged by the Albigensian wars in the company of a young squire, a blinded heretic, and a renegade monk. In Palestine he is captured and forced into slave labor by the infidel. But his capacity for faith allows him to overcome all agonies of the body and spirit, and in his last hour, dying alone on a hillside near Jerusalem, he

trustingly calls on God to be his priest.

His son Herbert, aptly nicknamed the Gross, is a man of brutal nature and prodigious physical appetites. Greedy, lecherous, cruel, disliked by his neighbors and alienated from his children, he has murdered, whored, and blasphemed his way into middle age. When the deed of incest he commits with his half-sister Eg-lantine causes him to be cursed by his mother, the Lady Alis, the pilgrimage he makes in expiation of his sins is little more than an impious fraud. On his return he is fatally injured by his son Haguenier while he is trying to beat his wife to death.

Haguenier, the young knight of Linnières, represents the tenderer, more idealistic side of the medieval temperament. He might have become an even worthier son of an unworthy father if he had not been afflicted by physical weakness or come under the spell of Lady Marie de Mongenast, whom he served faithfully but hopelessly according to the rules of chivalric love. In repentance, after his sin of parricide, he left the older

woman to whom he was married and his baby daughter, and entered a religious order.

It is plain that the three Linnières of the novel illustrate three different facets of medieval life and belief. Bluff old An-siau and Herbert le Gros stand at opposite poles of that age of contradictions and extremes; Haguenier, too sensitive for the rough life to which he has been trained, confusing his adoration of the virgin with his love for an earthly woman, dreamy, but manly in his capacity for fidelity and suffering, points to the more humanistic age which was soon to follow.

Mme. Oldenbourg has expressed a belief that in the contemporary novel there is too little concern with what is great and eternal in man. In this somber, richly imagined, and starkly imaged story of thirteenth century France she has held up a mirror of human conduct and faith which illumines the past to reflect the hopes and fears of our own confused and bloody time.

COUNT FRONTENAC AND NEW FRANCE UNDER LOUIS XIV

Type of work: History

Author: Francis Parkman (1823-1893)

Time: 1620-1701

Locale: Canada

First published: 1877

Principal personages:

LOUIS DE BUADE, COUNT FRONTENAC, Governor of New France from 1672 to 1682 and from 1689 to 1698

ANNA DE LA GRANGE TRIANON, COUNTESS FRONTENAC, his wife

LE FEBVRE DE LA BARRE, Count Frontenac's successor, 1682-1684

JACQUES BRISAY, MARQUIS DE DENOUVILLE, La Barre's successor, 1685-1689

FRANCIS XAVIER DE LAVAL-MONTMORENCY, Bishop of Quebec, Count Frontenac's rival

BISHOP SAINT-VALLIER, successor to Bishop Laval

SIR EDMUND ANDROS, the English governor of New York, New Jersey, and New England

SIR WILLIAM PHIPS, Governor of Massachusetts and leader of an expedition against Quebec

BARON DE SAINT-CASTIN, a French adventurer

FATHER PIERRE THURY, a priest hostile to the English

OTRÉOVATI (BIG MOUTH), a spokesman for the Onondaga tribe

Francis Parkman is one of the trio of great nineteenth century American historians, the other two being William Hickling Prescott and John Lothrop Motley. Of the three Parkman has stood best the test of time. His superiority lies in his approach. He is less rhetorical and florid in style, less likely to draw sweeping philosophical conclusions from his evidence, and more successful than his contemporaries in evoking history and making it live.

Born a sensitive, sickly son of a Boston Brahmin family, he nurtured extreme hatred for physical weakness. While still a student at Harvard he got "Injuns on the brain," as he said and was never able to cure himself of the affliction. After graduating he went on a trip, along the Oregon Trail, which covered seventeen hundred miles. From this trip came material for his first work, *The California and Oregon Trail* published in 1849, and he contracted the beginnings of the diseases that plagued him for the rest of his life, arthritis, near-blindness, and painful headaches, all complicated by neuroticism. Though unable to write more than a handful of pages a day, Parkman subsequently turned out volume after volume chronicling the great drama of the colonization and development of the North American Continent.

Count Frontenac and New France Under Louis XIV is the fifth in the historical series known collectively as *France and England in North America*, published in eleven volumes from 1851 to 1892. This volume, like the others, reveals Parkman's biases and prejudices. He disdained commerce, was not enthusiastic about democracy but hated tyranny, loved the past because he believed himself "a little medieval," and was a political reactionary. As he said in *The Old Regime in Canada*, "My political faith lies between two vicious extremes, democracy and absolute authority." He did not "object to a good constitutional monarchy, but prefers a conservative republic." Further, he obviously had greater respect for

Englishmen than for Frenchmen, for Protestantism than for Catholicism.

Count Frontenac and New France Under Louis XIV, which covers the years 1620 to 1701, focuses on the actions of its central title figure, who according to Parkman was "the most remarkable man who ever represented the crown of France in the New World. From strangely unpromising beginnings, he grew with every emergency, and rose equal to every crisis." The volume dramatically attempts to show "how valiantly, and for a time how successfully, New France battled against a fate which her own organic fault made inevitable. Her history is a great and significant drama, enacted among untamed forests, with a distant gleam of courtly splendors and the regal pomp of Versailles." He tries to tell the story "not in the interest of any race or nationality, but simply in that of historical truth."

Count Frontenac, descended from Basque parentage, came to America twice. The first time, in 1672, he came as Governor and Lieutenant-General for the King, partly it was said so that he could escape the terrible temper of his wife and so that he could have some means of livelihood. He was then fifty-two years old, and, as Parkman says, "keen, fiery, and perversely headstrong," age not having in any way weakened the "springs of his unconquerable vitality."

The "springs of his unconquerable vitality" immediately precipitated him into trouble. He loved pomp and circumstance and cherished the tradition of older liberties than those that prevailed at the French court. He longed for reinstitution of the three estates, clergy, nobles and commons, and their influence in national affairs. Therefore on October 23, 1672, these three estates of Canada were convoked. Immediately the reaction from the French court was firm and negative. Count Frontenac was cautioned always to observe the order of government prevailing at Versailles, and since the States-General had not been convoked there, the

governor was not to be so presumptuous again.

The troubles of Count Frontenac were just beginning. As soon as Bishop Laval returned from France, the inevitable clash occurred between them. The governor was jealous of his power, while the ecclesiastics desired to exercise, along with their spiritual authority, absolute control over temporal affairs in Canada. The clash grew more intense and wider. In 1682 Count Frontenac received his recall from the King. He left behind him the memory of an able and energetic man who would return again should danger threaten.

Count Frontenac's return to Canada came in 1689 when the warrior-politician was seventy years old but scarcely diminished in vigor and determination. Canada was in deep trouble with the Indians and with the English to the south. King Louis was beset by his Continental troubles and was tired of the fractious colony.

The history of the days of Count Frontenac's second stay in Canada must be written in blood, chronicles of intrigue, hatred, stupidity, clumsiness, and eternal fighting. Louis directed him to capture New York and New England, and to slaughter all non-Catholics. The scheme failed and the English in turn attacked Canada. In 1690 the English, under the command of Sir William Phips, directed several skirmishes against the French and finally lay siege to Quebec. This attack would have succeeded had Phips not been so stupidly headstrong as to ignore the only possible path into the cliff-top fortress that could insure his success, a path that was to be used later by General Wolfe with resounding success. Fi-

nally the English were forced to lift their siege.

Count Frontenac was hailed generally as the savior of Quebec by the grateful citizens. But his clash with the Church was renewed as soon as external threats were for the moment stilled. These waxed and waned, depending upon how events developed with the English, and the conflicts between these two nations remained always at the boil, precipitating constant battles and threats of battles, uncivilized massacres and bloodshed, keeping always before the Canadians the black specter of war. Through it all, however, he managed to stave off defeat.

Count Frontenac died in 1698, when he was seventy-eight years old. Up to his last breath he maintained full composure and his mental faculties. He was a hero to most Canadians, especially to the humbler classes. To one of the higher classes, who also valued him, he was "the love and delight of New France."

Appropriately, Parkman's history comes to a close just after the death of this man. Determined to be objective and to let the facts speak for themselves, the historian withholds greatness from Frontenac. An energetic and imaginative man, though vain and too much given to pomp, Frontenac, in Parkman's eyes, can be least forgiven for the "barbarity of the warfare that he waged, and the cruelties that he permitted." But he was not nearly as barbarous as many people urged him to be.

Greatness must not be given him, Parkman says, "but a more remarkable figure, in its bold and salient individuality and sharply marked light and shadow, is nowhere seen in American history."

THE CRITICAL ESSAYS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Author: William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

First published: *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, 1817; *Lectures on the English Poets*, 1818; *Views of the English Stage*, 1818; *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, 1819; *Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, 1821

There were two pre-eminent literary critics in the second decade of the nineteenth century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Hazlitt. While the former developed his critical principles in his early philosophical studies and in a decade of splendid poetic creation, the latter had no such period of creativity to look back on when he began his career as journalist-critic in 1813, at the age of thirty-six. His early life was a series of failures. Neither his earnest attempts to become a portraitist nor equally earnest attempts to make a reputation as a political and philosophical writer had borne fruit. In 1812, he and his family lived in London almost without funds until a series of lectures helped set the family on its feet. He then served an important apprenticeship as a journalist in Parliament and, in 1813, found the work which exactly suited him: writing dramatic criticism and essays on many topics for various periodicals.

Within a decade Hazlitt ranked with Coleridge as literary critic as a result of both spoken and written essays. His lecture series was very popular. The series *Lectures on the English Poets* was given early in 1818; *English Comic Writers* was delivered late that year. The following year he delivered the series *The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*. These lecture series were duly issued in book form. His most important written criticism includes *View of the English Stage*, which covers the years 1813-1818, and the *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*.

Hazlitt was one of the first professional critics to have a significant identity as a critic. In the previous century, when the monthly reviews were established, most criticism was anonymous and probably no critic was half so well known for his criticism as Hazlitt became. One reason is that earlier writers on literature, such as Tobias Smollett and Samuel Johnson, relied largely on original compositions for their livelihood and reputations, while

Hazlitt, through his essays and lectures, built his reputation as an essayist-critic.

He made his critical reputation largely by reviewing contemporary drama and by lecturing, often on Elizabethan poetry and drama. Thus, like most literary critics, he had his feet planted in both past and present. He often tried to explain the difference between the contemporary and the Elizabethan, the antipodes of literary creation in Hazlitt's mind. He admired the work of several Renaissance writers basically for their objectivity. As he wrote of Shakespeare in "On Shakespeare and Milton," "He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be." Or, as the Hazlitt-inspired John Keats was to write later the same year: "the poetical Character . . . is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing." Hazlitt admired Shakespeare for keeping his self out of his poetry and for his genius in leaving his own consciousness behind in order to enter the consciousness of his characters. It is understandable, therefore, that Hazlitt would find serious flaws in the poetry of his own age. It was for him, generally, unbearably narcissistic. In a review of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he lashes out at the ennui and world-weariness of Byron's self-contemplative hero. From such a position it is a small step to this assessment of Byron's famous contemporary: "Mr. Wordsworth, to salve his own self-love, makes the merest toy of his own mind,—the most insignificant object he can meet with,—of as much importance as the universe." It was the subjectivity or the egotism of the moderns that revolted Hazlitt, as he clearly revealed in his review of *The Excursion*. Despite his high praise for the poem "in power of intellect, in lofty conception, in the depth of feeling, at once simple and sublime" he finds fault with both the descriptions of nature and the handling of human nature since "an intense intellectual egotism swallows up every thing." Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that Hazlitt was un-

fairly prejudiced against the poets of his day; he was neither blind to the originality and power of his contemporaries nor unwilling to praise their works.

The reasons behind Hazlitt's mixed feelings regarding the poets of his day and his preference for the writings of Shakespeare and Milton are suggested by an essay in *The Examiner* for October 2, 1814, in which he alludes to an important distinction between different kinds of poets and the poetry they write. Poetry is of two classes, "the poetry of imagination and the poetry of sentiment." The former "consists in the power of calling up images of the most pleasing or striking kind; the other depends on the strength of the interest which it excites in given objects." Naturally, the greatest writers possess both powers, but in his opinion such poets as Young and Cowley instance "the separation of feeling from fancy" and Wordsworth "is certainly deficient in fanciful invention."

Hazlitt's thoughts on criticism and the critic were never systematically formulated at any length, but certain essays give us some insights on how he regarded his calling, as, for example, "On Criticism," which is primarily an attack on modern criticism. In it, he reveals his admiration for certain aspects of eighteenth century criticism and his awareness of the critical drift since then. Critics of the preceding century were "gentle almost to a fault" and there was "no scalping of authors, no hacking and hewing of their Lives and Opinions," except in the case of Laurence Sterne and *Tristram Shandy*. But in Hazlitt's day critics were somewhat less gentle, and somewhat more anxious to utter dogmatic, sometimes violent, evaluations of works. Hazlitt had still other objections to certain modern critical methods. The scholarly investigator aroused Hazlitt's ire when he was guilty of employing "the dry and meagre mode of dissecting the skeletons of works, instead of transfusing their living principles." Other critics to be despised are the "mere word-catchers" who object to tiny flaws

in usage, those who let their personal biases establish the criteria for literary excellence, and the men of peevish genius who are delighted by nothing.

In considering Hazlitt's own criticism, one should remember how he wrote much of it. Most of it, especially that on the drama, was produced for instant publication. He wrote rapidly, quoting freely from his amazing memory and gave little thought to structure or revision. As a result, many of the critical essays have great spontaneity and verve, but they often lack structure. Of his many critical essays which might be chosen to show how well he measured up to the standards which he suggested in "On Criticism," "On Milton's Sonnets" is a fair representation of his method. He frankly admits his deep admiration for the sonnets. After comparing Milton's achievement in this genre with that of Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, and Wordsworth, in all cases to Milton's advantage, he launches into the essay by a long paragraph that loads statement on statement concerning Milton's "ideal faculty in his composition" and then quotes the Cyriac Skinner sonnet in its entirety. After the barest commentary about its beauties he turns to the sonnet to Cromwell, quotes it, and then quotes the entire Piedmont Massacre sonnet. In all, he quotes six sonnets of Milton (and one of Shakespeare) in a seven page essay. Naturally a critic may use extensive quotation to support his assertions, but Hazlitt has little to assert except rather commonplace generalizations. Of the sonnet "On his Blindness" Hazlitt says that "we see the jealous watchfulness of his mind over the use of his high gifts, and the beautiful manner in which he satisfies himself that virtuous thoughts and intentions are not the least acceptable offer to the Almighty." In this kind of "appreciation criticism" the use of large quantities of quotations to illustrate obvious comments is quite common in British criticism. But there is a fault in the essay often met in Hazlitt's writing, and one that cannot so easily be blamed

on tradition: there is no logic whatever in its order. Hazlitt simply moves from favorite sonnet to favorite sonnet with no progression, no development. In many of his critical essays the same qualities appear: the piling of statement on statement, the lack of logical structure, the use of extensive, one might say excessive, quotations.

But not all that one says of his critical essays is on the debit side of the ledger. Sudden insights illuminate nearly all of his essays as, for instance, this striking explanation of one of Milton's paradoxes: "Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer." "In reading his works, we feel ourselves under the influence of a mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches to others becomes more distinct from them." Part of the worth of Hazlitt's critical essays, moreover, is due to his style. He

may have overloaded occasional paragraphs with allusions and quotations, but his own words were thoughtfully chosen. He is sincere, candid, and vigorous. He is a voice of experience that has not lost all the warmth and passion of youth. Even in the essay "On Reading Old Books," in which he laments the loss of his youth and with it much of the pleasure of reading, he is still capable of this kind of writing, at once warm, and sincere. Old books, Hazlitt notes, "bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity." "They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours." "They are like Fortunatus's Wishing Cap—they give us the best riches—those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice!"

CULTURE AND ANARCHY

Type of work: Social criticism
Author: Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)
First published: 1869

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold sought a center of authority by which the anarchy caused by the troubled passage of the Reform Bill of 1867 might be regulated. At its best his style is clear, flexible, and convincing, but Arnold wrote in such a complicated mood of indignation, impatience, and fear that his style and his argumentative method are frequently repetitious and unsystematic. Still, the book is a masterpiece of polished prose in which urbane irony and shafts of ridicule are used to persuade the Victorian middle class that it must reform itself before it can reform the entire nation.

Writing as a so-called Christian Humanist, Arnold primarily directed his criticism against the utilitarianism of the followers of Jeremy Bentham and John

Stuart Mill and against the various movements of liberal reform. Disturbed by the social and political confusion, by Fenianism and the Hyde Park Riots of 1866, and by the inability of either the Church or the government to cope with the growing unrest both in England and on the Continent, Arnold attempted to describe an objective center of authority that all men, regardless of religious or social bias, could follow.

This center of authority is culture, which he defined on the level of the individual as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world." Because this authority is internal, it is a study of perfection within the individual, a study which should elevate

the "best self" through a fresh and free search for beauty and intelligence. By following "right reason," the disinterested intellectual pursuits of the "best self," Arnold foresaw a way to overcome the social and political confusion of the 1860's and to prepare for a future in which all men could be happy and free. With this basically romantic view of man as a means and human perfectibility as the end, Arnold turned to social criticism, carefully showing that no other center of authority was tenable. The ideal of non-conformity, the disestablishment of the Church, led to confusion or anarchy because it represented the sacrifice of all other sides of human personality to the religious. The ideal of the liberal reformers also led to anarchy because it regarded the reforms as ends rather than means toward a harmonious totality of human existence.

Arnold clarifies his definition of culture by tracing its origin to curiosity or "scientific passion" (the desire to see things as they really are) and to morality or "social passion" (the desire to do good). Christianity, as he saw it, was like culture in that it also sought to learn the will of God (human perfection) and make it prevail; but culture went beyond religion as interpreted by the Nonconformists in that it was a harmonious expansion of all human powers. In even sharper terms, culture was opposed to utilitarianism which Arnold considered "mechanical" because it worshiped means rather than ends. In fact, anything—materialism, economic greatness, individual wealth, bodily health, Puritanism—that was treated as an end except that of human perfectibility was to Arnold mere "machinery" that led to anarchy. Only culture, the harmonious union of poetry (the ideal of beauty) and religion (the ideal of morality), saw itself as a means that preserved the totality of the individual. Culture looked beyond machinery; it had only one passion—the passion for "sweetness" (beauty) and "light" (intelli-

gence) and the passion to make them prevail. With such a passion it sought to do away with social classes and religious bias to make the best that has been thought and known in the world ("right reason") the core of human endeavor and institutions.

After establishing his definition of culture in terms of the individual, Arnold turned toward the problem of society. He saw the characteristic view of Englishmen toward happiness as the individual's desire "to do what he liked," or freedom, but he also saw that each class had its own opinion as to what it liked to do. In other words, there was a strong belief in freedom but a weak belief in "right reason" which should view freedom disinterestedly. This misplacing of belief was to Arnold one of the chief causes of anarchy; it was the mistake of acting before thinking. Ideally, "right reason" should precede action, and the State should be the disinterested union of all classes, a collective "best self." In reality, the State was being led toward anarchy by class interests because the aristocracy, or "Barbarians," were inaccessible to new, fresh ideas; the middle class, or "Philistines," had zeal but not knowledge; and the working class, or "Populace," was raw and untrained. Because culture alone could join the two sides of the individual, culture alone could overcome the narrow views of the three classes since it was disinterested and sought only the perfection of all men. Members of the different classes possessed the same human nature and saw happiness as freedom; also, the "best self" was common to all classes. Therefore, since authority could be found neither in religion nor in politics, it could be found only in individuals who, by following "right reason" rather than class bias, could assert their "best selves" in a harmonious union that sought the best for everyone. The major impediments to such a state were what Arnold called "Atheism," the outright denial of such a thing as "right reason," and "Qui-

etism," the utilitarian belief that reason was the result of habit. These impediments Arnold rejected on the basis of intuition and faith. Ethics can be known intuitively, and by building faith on the individual's intuition the spirit of culture could overcome the present anarchy.

The enlargement of his terms from the individual to the State naturally led Arnold to consider the historical development of the social and political confusion that he confronted. In the famous chapter titled "Hebraism and Hellenism," Arnold accounted for the very ground and cause out of which actual behavior arises, by distinguishing between (1) the energy in human affairs that drives at practice, the obligation of duty, self-control, and work (Hebraism) and (2) the energy that drives at those ideas which are the basis of right practice (Hellenism). Like the "scientific passion," Hellenism's chief function is to see things as they really are, and like the "social passion," Hebraism seeks proper conduct and obedience. In other words, what Arnold earlier analyzed as the opposing drives in the individual, he now enlarges to a historical context, all human endeavor in the Western World being associated with either the one or the other drive. Both drives aim at human perfection or salvation, but their means and ideals are sharply different. Hebraism, or "strictness of conscience," inculcates a sense of sin, but Hellenism, the "spontaneity of consciousness," teaches what Arnold has called culture.

The rise of Christianity marked the great triumph of Hebraism over Hellenism, but the Renaissance marked the resurgence of Hellenism. The anarchy of the 1860's Arnold saw as the result of Puritanism's reaffirmation of Hebraism in the seventeenth century, a reaffirmation that was against the currents of history. The problem was intensified by the Puri-

tan belief that duty was an end in itself, whereas in reality both great drives are no more than contributions to human development. Thus, in England there was too much Hebraism, so much, in fact, that religion and politics had become mechanical. As a solution, Arnold suggested that Hellenism be imported. In Hellenism, which ultimately is a synonym for culture, the ideals of internal harmony, or the unity of the total man, and of harmony with things overcome the one-sidedness of Hebraism. The other drive, however, should not be excluded, for Hellenism alone leads to moral relaxation. There should be a harmony of both sides, a union from which would come the awakening of a healthier and less mechanical activity.

After analyzing culture in terms of the individual, the State, and history, Arnold turned to the particular issues before Parliament at the time he wrote. He directed his wit and some of his most vivacious ridicule against the four political reforms that were at the heart of liberalism—the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the Real Estate Intestacy Bill, the Deceased Sister's Wife Bill, and Free Trade—and showed that the liberal reformers lacked disinterestedness, displayed a remarkable absence of reason, and unconsciously led to anarchy. By leaving the issues that were uppermost in his mind to the last, he dramatically illustrated that culture alone could lead to perfection. For him the four bills were examples of the disbelief in "right reason" and the Philistine endeavor to act without thought. Thus, he warned that without "right reason" there could be no society and without society there could be no perfection. Only "right reason," the disinterested search for the best that has been thought or done regardless of class interests, could defeat anarchy by establishing the way to happiness through harmony.

THE CYPRESSES BELIEVE IN GOD

Type of work: Novel

Author: José María Gironella (1917-)

Time: 1931-1936

Locale: Spain

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

MATÍAS ALVEAR, a telegraph operator in Gerona

CARMEN ELGAZU DE ALVEAR, his wife

IGNACIO,

CÉSAR, and

PILAR, the Alvear children

MARTA MARTÍNEZ DE SORIA, sweetheart of Ignacio

MATEO SANTOS, a Falangist organizer and the sweetheart of Pilar

COSME VILA, a Communist leader

DON JORGE DE BATILLE, a wealthy Catalan landowner

AGUSTÍN, an anarchist

JULIO GARCIA, the friend of Matías, chief of police in Gerona

ERNESTO ORIOL, the friend of Ignacio

LUIS COMPANYYS, a Catalan lawyer and politician

JOSÉ ANTONIO PRIMO DE RIVERA, founder of the Falange Española

GENERAL FRANCISCO FRANCO BAHAMONDE, later head of the Spanish State

The Cypresses Believe in God possesses qualities, both historical and social, that command a measure of critical respect in keeping with the compassion and high seriousness of its theme. Part of the book's importance lies in its subject, the drift of the Spanish people into bloody and disastrous civil war. Señor Gironella's plan is ambitious and impressive. This novel tells the story of Spanish life and history from the founding of the Republic in 1931 to the outbreak of the Civil War in July, 1936. The second part, *One Million Dead*, deals with the actual fighting of the war.

The Spanish Civil War has already received extensive treatment in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and Malraux's *Man's Hope*, but these were tourist books and not conceived on so vast a scale. Gironella, on the other hand, tells the story as it shaped itself in one man's lifetime and experience. This complex and crowded novel, published in Spain in 1953, makes the reader understand why the Spanish Civil War holds its own unique place among the wars of our

troubled century: it was a conflict whose issues were both peninsular and universal, and like the American Civil War it was a tragic drama creating against a seething background of history its own spiritual climate of turbulence and anguish.

That agony is peculiarly Spanish, the national *mystique* of a proud and melancholy people. In a brief preface written for the American edition of *The Cypresses Believe in God*, Gironella declared that it is difficult to consider Spain with detachment. Legends grow: Spain of legend and folklore, of tragic history, of folklore, of the fiesta and the bullfight. Yet he was prepared to defend the complexity of his ancient and unhappy land: to him it represented the possibility of a thousand ways of life.

In Spain, when the novel first appeared, it was called implacable. The term very well describes the nature of Señor Gironella's performance. At the same time it must be admitted that the novel's acceptance by the present regime in Spain leaves it open to political ques-

tioning. Gironella himself was a young Falangist, nineteen years old at the beginning of the Civil War, but the book gives the impression that he himself went through a period of indecision and confusion similar to that of his own Ignacio before choosing sides in the conflict. He is therefore able to preserve a point of view which is on the whole admirably objective when dealing with events and personalities for whom there was in actual history no middle ground. Also, the novel is saved from becoming a completely partisan work by the fact that Gironella, as a Roman Catholic, is also a writer in that great Christian tradition. In spite of his tendency to overplay the role of the Communists in the events leading up to the military uprising against the Republic, his generous and full understanding of men and their motives saves him from a too doctrinaire point of view. His allegiance to the traditional order of Church and State is no more extreme than that of Ernest Hemingway, for example, in support of the Loyalist cause.

In the opening pages of the novel the writer presents his people against their background with the beautiful precision and rather flattish realism characteristic of the Spanish novel. The focusing center of the story is a typical middle-class family, the Alvears, who live in the provincial capital of Gerona in Catalonia, a prosperous region of northeastern Spain which during the Civil War became a Loyalist stronghold. Matías Alvear is a telegraph operator who has moved to Gerona from Madrid. A man of even disposition, he likes to fish in the river beneath his apartment windows and play dominoes in his favorite café of an evening. He has Socialist and Anarchist relatives in Burgos and Madrid, but he himself believes that with some brains and a little honesty the Republicans will survive. His wife, Carmen Elgazu de Alvear, has inherited the stanch Basque Catholic reverence for authority and tradition. They have three children. Ignacio, the oldest, had been intended for the priest-

hood, but he discovers that he has no real religious vocation and becomes a teller in a bank. César, the second son, is a seminarian; completely without political interests, he is his devout mother's pride. Pilar is the daughter, convent-educated and attracted to the young leader of the Gerona Falangists.

Gironella begins with a family, but like the expanding waves of a stone dropped into a deep pool his novel gradually widens to enclose a picture of a city, a whole society, a nation. Yet in the coming conflict of Socialist-Republican-Anarchist forces on the one hand and Catholic-Monarchist-Nationalists on the other it is still the individual who counts for most. Ignacio is the person through whom the ambiguities and agonies of the Civil War are most clearly revealed. He has absorbed his father's liberal views as well as his mother's religious beliefs. He begins as a believer in the Republican formulas, strengthened by his knowledge of ancient abuses man has suffered under the authority of Church and State, but his growing skepticism of other abuses sanctioned in the name of progress keeps him from wholeheartedly accepting the new political and social creeds. He assures himself that he will fight when he is able to see clearly. At the end of the novel he is still torn between his distrust of the old prejudices and injustices and his dislike for the new fanaticism and violence, but he is slowly turning toward the Falangist party because, in spite of its chauvinism, it stands for Catholic tradition and a program of order.

For César, the sixteen-year-old priest, there is no such conflict. His end is martyrdom before a firing squad in one of the flaring episodes of violence that were dividing Spain into two passionate halves. He is killed for his efforts to save the Blessed Sacrament from destruction while wild Republican mobs are burning the churches. By that time the failure of a military uprising in Gerona and the reprisals that follow point to the inevitable outbreak of civil war and the hatreds and

cruelties it will soon engender. But Señor Gironella never loses sight of the human predicament and the single man who finds himself a party to mass movements.

Out of small details Señor Gironella traces out the complexities and uncovers the deeper reality of *The Cypresses Believe in God*. His novel makes one thing clear. The Spanish Civil War was not a

conflict, with issues plainly drawn, between liberals and reactionaries, between laborers and bourgeoisie. It was a struggle in which men of innocence and virtue on both sides were corrupted by forces of modern ideologies and made to serve ignoble and vicious ends. In this powerful novel the author shows us the schizophrenia of modern history itself.

CYROPAEDIA

Type of work: Fictional biography

Author: Xenophon (c. 430-c. 354 B.C.)

First transcribed: Fourth century B.C.

Principal personages:

CYRUS THE GREAT

CAMBYSES, his father and king of the Persians

MANDANE, his mother, the daughter of Astyages

ASTYAGES, King of Media

CYAXARES, Astyages' son and Mandane's brother

ARASPAS, Cyrus's comrade from youth

PANTHEIA, the wife of Abradatas

ABRADATAS, an Assyrian noble

CAMBYSES and

TANAOXARES, the sons of Cyrus

Among the surviving authors of ancient Greek literature, Xenophon has the distinction of being the first who wrote in a variety of prose genres, forms which deal with an even greater variety of subject matter. Most of the early prose writers of Greece devoted themselves with notable single-mindedness to either history, the philosophic or scientific treatise of a given sort, dialogue, or rhetoric. But Xenophon wrote in nearly all of these forms. What is more, one of his latest works is a composition which even now is essentially *sui generis*. The *Cyropaedia*, or *Education of Cyrus*, has been called a historical romance. The name may be convenient, but there is in fact no adequate classification for the work. "Didactic-romantic-political-fictional-biography" might come closer.

Xenophon has incorporated in the *Cyropaedia* some treatment of nearly all the topics which he developed separately in his more restricted works. Of his historical interests, despite the title and osten-

sible subject, there is only a slight trace: the historical and geographical reliability of Xenophon's tale is minimal. The *Hel-lenica*, covering Greek history from the point where Thucydides left off, in 411 B.C., to the death of Epaminondas in 362 B.C., and the *Anabasis* remain his only strictly historical creations. The latter, a famous account of the author's participation as a young man in a Greek mercenary army expedition deep into the Persian Empire, is probably his best work. The *Cyropaedia* "resumes" some of the romance of expert generalship in exotic terrain. The extensive discussions of Cyrus' wise arrangements in military, political, social, and economic order recall the concerns reflected in Xenophon's *Constitution of Sparta*, *Agésilas* (on the Spartan king, here treated as a model leader), *Hiero*, and *Oeconomicus*. The account of Cyrus' education and the portrait of his personal virtues and world-wisdom which culminates in his death-bed discourse to his sons on the soul—

these continue in their way the philosophical writings of Xenophon which are centered on Socrates, chiefly in the *Memorabilia*. The attention devoted to horsemanship, hunting, and conviviality ("Cyrus at Banquet," as it were) are vestiges of still other works of his. As a final seasoning for the whole, Xenophon includes the first love romance in Western literature, the story of Pantheia and Abradatas.

This topical cross section presents a complex of matters from which a writer of genius might well have woven an absorbing tapestry comprising an intellectual and cultural summary of the age, an encyclopedic *Bildungsroman* like *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* or *The Magic Mountain*. Xenophon failed to do so. The quality of the product can be assessed after the following summary:

Book I: Cyrus the Great is born of Cambyses, King of Persia, and Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, King of Media. Reared until his twelfth year in Persian simplicity and discipline, he then visits Media for five years. There he learns to ride a horse and hunt, and he wins the friendship and admiration of the Medes by his virtues. He returns home and completes his training under his father's guidance. When Media is threatened by an Assyrian invasion, Cyaxares, the son of the now deceased Astyages, asks aid of the Persians. Cyrus is sent in command of the Persian forces. *Book II:* In Media, Cyrus reorganizes his army and prepares it physically and psychologically for combat. The King of Armenia, a vassal to Cyaxares, revolts. *Book III:* Cyrus reconquers him by brilliant strategy and recovers his allegiance to Cyaxares by equally brilliant diplomacy. He executes a similar feat with the Chaldeans, the neighbors of the Armenians. Cyaxares and Cyrus then advance together to meet the Assyrians, and, thanks largely to Cyrus' generalship, the Assyrians are defeated in a first engagement at the border. *Book IV:* Cyaxares becomes jealous of Cyrus' reputation and decides to stay behind with his own

army, allowing Cyrus to move ahead as he pleases. Cyrus, however, persuades most of the Median army to accompany him as well. He wins over to his side the Hyrcanians, a subject people of the Assyrians. After a second defeat of the Assyrians he provides the Persians with a cavalry force of their own. Cyaxares in growing vexation orders that the Median "volunteers" with Cyrus be sent home. Cyrus sends a message in justification of his non-compliance. Gobryas, a vassal of the Assyrian king, defects to Cyrus. *Book V:* Cyrus advances to the walls of Babylon but postpones an assault on the city. Three more subject peoples accede to the Persians. Cyrus returns to the border of Media and there confronts the spleen and chagrin of Cyaxares with such dexterity that his uncle is publicly reconciled to him. *Book VI:* Further military preparations are carried on in winter quarters. Pantheia, the wife of a noble subject of the Assyrian king, had been earlier captured and given into the keeping of Araspas, a Median officer in Cyrus' entourage. Araspas now attempts to seduce her. She appeals to Cyrus and is protected. In consequence, her husband Abradatas is won over to Cyrus. *Book VII:* A massive army of Assyrians and allies under the command of Croesus, King of Lydia, is defeated. Before the battle Pantheia takes pathetic leave of Abradatas, who dies a hero's death in the fighting. Pantheia kills herself over his body. Croesus, captured after the siege of Sardis, is generously treated by Cyrus. After several other campaigns, Babylon is taken by stratagem and victory is complete. *Book VIII:* Cyrus organizes his empire, marries the daughter of Cyaxares, and after a long reign holds a final edifying discourse on his deathbed. A surprising postscript sarcastically details the degeneration of the Persians since the time of Cyrus.

On the very face of it the arrangement is unpromising. The action advances without complication except for such essentially irrelevant episodes as those involving Pantheia. And in no other fash-

ion is there sufficient human richness to sustain the objective material. Xenophon's political and moral concerns, to be sure, are worked in by a superabundant series of dialogues and speeches, devices which Thucydides had employed with brilliant effect. (*The Magic Mountain* again provides some parallels.) But for Thucydides the issues and personalities of the Peloponnesian War were problematic and many-sided to an overwhelming degree. Xenophon's Cyrus, by contrast, is so mercilessly idealized that no counterforce can be set up to provide enough tension to launch issues or personalities. The nearest thing to such a confrontation lies in the theme of the growing jealousy of Cyaxares. Thucydides would have been capable of presenting in Cyaxares a potent distillate of everything vital in Spartan and Athenian culture which opposed that particular composite of Athenian-Spartan ideals read by Xenophon into the figure of Cyrus. But Xenophon's Cyaxares is a pathetic also-ran who is graciously manipulated by his herogentleman nephew.

The didactic material is not simply embedded in the inorganic framework of successive events without human complication; a lapidary could still have made the segments memorable. But for the most part, when Xenophon settles into a discourse or dialogue, he produces a run of facile, repetitious, platitudinous elegance. (Skill in specious conversation was clearly part of the Greek ideal of the gentleman, as it has been of the later European permutations.) In this fashion he managed to stuff out his stick-figure design to some four hundred pages.

One obvious moral to be drawn, then, is that the *Cyropaedia* should never be

read straight through except in Greek, since it is only the grace of its style which gives some salt to many a dull page. But it should in justice be admitted that a wisely condensed English version would be worth its reading time. Anecdotes possessed of point and humor, moments with some vividness of situation and character, do occur. (For example, some country-bumpkin rookies in training are told that they must march behind their lieutenant. When the lieutenant is by chance sent on a postal errand, the entire platoon obediently runs off behind him.) And at times the practical wisdom has its interest. Cambyes to Cyrus on how to manage his men: When encouraging them by hopes which are not certain to be fulfilled, one should not personally suggest these doubtful hopes; get someone else to act as mouthpiece.

More important, however, some rapid acquaintance with the text of the *Cyropaedia* will always be worthwhile because of the position this book occupies in the development of the ancient political imagination. Both Xenophon and another Socratic enthusiast gave their minds much to the problem of the inadequacy of existing Greek political systems. Plato's *Republic* in its artistry and profundity transcends Xenophon beyond all compare. But Plato never conceived of a satisfactory political order larger than the city-state, and the times were leaving him behind: until our own days of uncertain world government, *empire* was henceforth to be the chief ideal for international political order, and from Alexander the Great to Stalin that empire was to be predominantly monarchical. Xenophon, a half-century before Alexander, is the first literary exponent of monarchical empire.

DAMAGED SOULS

Type of work: Biographies

Author: Gamaliel Bradford (1863-1932)

Time: 1737-1893

Locale: America, England, Europe

First published: 1923

Principal personages:

BENEDICT ARNOLD

THOMAS PAINE

AARON BURR

JOHN RANDOLPH

JOHN BROWN

PHINEAS TAYLOR BARNUM

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BUTLER

Though the reviews of the time were not unmixed, *Damaged Souls* remains as the best book by Gamaliel Bradford and unique in the history of letters: a contribution to American history, biography, and literature. Although Taine is supposed to have originated the term, Bradford was the most active "psychographer." His biographical studies are not so much life stories as spiritual silhouettes.

The introductory essay, applauded as a new departure, the model for interviews in depth, suggests that the souls of Bradford's subjects are not damned, that each has a unique quality offset by a flaw. While H. L. Mencken suggested that only the first five are worthy of the sympathetic treatment, Barnum and Butler having insufficiently developed or callously overthrown souls, most critics accepted Bradford's carefully documented verdicts on the minds and hearts he explores.

Bradford, admitting to prejudice, likens Arnold's manly though misguided vigor and Burr's personal though selfish charm to Paine's and Barnum's blatant and zealous natures. But in all those selected some kind of spiritual flaw appears to explain, even though it does not justify, the stigma that has determined the public reputations of these personages. Bradford's main purpose, however, was not to stress the stigma but to show his people in their rounded and more human characters. Thus of Benedict Arnold, who abandoned the unfortunate Major André, who blackened his reputation for valorous, unselfish deeds, the reader gains an insight into his quixotic nature, his anger and feeling of slight, his physical needs, and his despair. The most telling irony concerns a meeting

with Talleyrand in which Arnold dared not reveal himself.

Thomas Paine's character was formed in rebellion, Bradford believes, and his restless nature and brilliant verbal insights formed a platform for vigorous action. His work was inspired by love of humanity rather than by the egoism so marked in his exterior. There is no reason why he did not advance in the cause of the poor and the downtrodden, though rebellion was his method and violence often the result. His exterior appearance, his slovenly habits and lack of cleanliness, his addiction to drink in a drinking age, only illumine his lack of selfish concern and his higher loyalties.

Aaron Burr, by contrast, had no ideals, but exhibited a most joyful, forthright nature. He indulged himself in the pleasures of companionship, especially that of women whom he found irresistible, and he lived off those who were drawn into his confidence and bewitched by his charm. His strange projects are to this day inexplicable, perhaps not even realized in the planning, though his "villainies" seem to be the result of lack of consideration. Burr's love for his daughter and her tender but open-eyed concern for him form a kind of redemption. He carried no grudges, he gave generously if indiscriminately, and he looked to eternity and a god whom he believed kinder than most people give him credit for.

God's angry man, John Brown, seems to Bradford the most complex of all since right is on both sides where Brown's motives and actions are concerned. His intense and fanatical enthusiasm formed the glory and caused the damage. Barnum was the product of his age who

honestly believed that humbug was a commodity, though he himself preferred the high things and practiced a warm-hearted cordiality. John Randolph, on the other hand, was the noblest of these flawed personages; his noble qualities of mind and spirit were undone by bad temper and exacerbated nerves, so that he had little influence for good. Benjamin Franklin Butler, the least engaging of the group as well as the most self-righteous, felt, in summation, that he had performed only good acts and those continually.

Gamaliel Bradford remains a persuasive advocate of restrained judgment, leaving to God the final decisions, as he whimsically suggests we must. To read deeply *pro et contra* was his technique, his formula to seek and display motive and drive; and his rhythm was that of his subject's pulse. The result is Bergson's *élan vital* brilliantly projected. Bradford's gallery of portraits, finally, included whole and mended as well as damaged souls, and his books will remain in our relativist age as models.

A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME

Type of work: A trilogy of novels

Author: Anthony Powell (1905-)

Time: 1921 to 1932

Locale: An English public school, London, Oxford, and some country houses

First published: *A Question of Upbringing*, 1951; *A Buyer's Market*, 1952; *The Acceptance World*, 1955

Principal characters:

NICHOLAS JENKINS, the narrator, a novelist

CAPTAIN GILES JENKINS, his uncle

PETER TEMPLER, Nick's friend, later at work in London

MONA, his wife

JEAN, his sister

CHARLES STRINGHAM, a friend of Nick and Templer

KENNETH WIDMERPOOL, an older schoolfellow of Nick

MR. LE BAS, the housemaster at Nick's school

MR. SILLERY, an Oxford don

EDGAR DEACON, a painter and antique dealer

RALPH BARNBY, an increasingly successful young painter

GYPSY JONES, a young Communist

E. ST.-JOHN CLARKE, a successful, unfashionable novelist

MARK MEMBERS, a poet and critic

J. G. QUIGGIN, a literary journalist

BARBARA GORING, a debutante

MILLY ANDRIADIS, a society hostess

Anthony Powell's great series of novels is a unique project today, with twelve books planned. The style and subject matter are traditional and each volume can be appreciated in isolation. As is consistent with the major theme, Powell moves forward and back in time unfolding his plot. There are no innovations of form in the books. Nevertheless, these

novels are regarded as probably the most original and stimulating fiction appearing in England at the present time.

The first three books, which cover the period from the early 1920's to the early 1930's, form a complete social history of the period expressed through the experience of Nick Jenkins, his friends, colleagues, and their families. *A Question of*

Upbringing and *A Buyer's Market* are in four parts; *The Acceptance World* is in five.

The evocative power and subtle, arresting brilliance of Powell's style are immediately apparent in the descriptive opening sections. All the elements are there: high-seriousness, near-bathos controlled with wit, metaphors from the arts, and an astringent nostalgia. This talent for meaningful juxtaposition of phrase is also important in Powell's delineation of character. In the first section of *A Question of Upbringing*, Kenneth Widmerpool with his aggrieved expression takes concrete form in Nick's mind: his appearance is plain, stiff, and Widmerpool moves in a like manner out of the fog-like air. Nick's vision of Widmerpool as an individual remains with him, and their lives are to be linked erratically for the next thirty years.

Widmerpool feels moral disapproval of Nick's closest friends, Charles Stringham and Peter Templer. Stringham, who reminds Nick of Veronese's Alexander, belongs to the class also castigated by Nick's Uncle Giles, who is a wealthy man. Templer, Widmerpool feels, is a poor influence on the members of the house, and he becomes almost physically distressed at young Templer's experiments with pipe-smoking, alcohol, and women. Widmerpool leaves school a year before Nick, although in a typically economical illustration of his farcical intrusion on Nick's life and of his latent power his name remains on the house-list through an oversight of the housemaster, Le Bas.

Nick and Widmerpool next meet in France—this episode forms the third section of the book—whence Nick has gone trying to solve the problem of being more mature than a boy, but not yet an adult male.

Powell uses hyperbole so accurately and incisively that one or two sentences reverberate throughout a chapter and control the reader's emotional response. Witty and unlabored, this account and another on Widmerpool place the two

boys at a precise point in their adolescence. The economy with which such analyses are effected enables Powell to write largely on actual happenings: here, the social environment of a Tourraine house party for paying guests.

The second section of *A Question of Upbringing* is more closely concerned with society in its limited sense and deals also with the family and early love relationships of Nick, Stringham, and Templer. This chapter opens with a consideration of one's judgment of other people which is a commentary also on Powell's own blend of comic and tragic incident. Powell has an exact eye for significant detail and a virtually absolute selectiveness of words and metaphor. Each phrase in his extremely descriptive books interprets the mood, place, or character described. This stylistic ability gives to the novels an absorbing, almost gripping power.

At a family lunch Nick discovers Stringham's reservations about Templer, whom Nick had always regarded as Stringham's closest friend. Stringham feels that Templer does fit in with the idea of home life. Stringham's "home life" includes a stepfather, Buster Foxe, whose personality is cold and chilling; his mother, a thrice-married beauty, rich and overpowering; and Tuffy Weedon, Mrs. Foxe's secretary, whose face on greeting Charles is so cheerful that it seems to be intense and anxious. These people create an atmosphere unknown and oppressive to Nick.

Peter and Nick are together at school the following term. Peter remarks that he enjoys the more common things and that Charles' home life must be filled with too many good things. This is almost Charles' view of his stepfather. Peter adds that even lunch must have been rather stuffy. The judgment surprises Nick, but is one subsequently made of Charles himself.

Nick stays with Templer's family before he goes to France. The household is quite different from Stringham's fashionable London home. Templer's father, a

graceless widower, made his money in cement; he talks exclusively about the stock market. Here Nick meets Jean Templer and falls in love with her. The Templer home is described with fantasy in hyperbolic terms. This device creates an atmospheric heightening which is often employed before an emotional encounter between characters. The expansive villa is built on a cliff where clouds drift in the sky and the waves against the stones create a sense of being cryptic, a place of adventure. Immediately, Nick sees Jean and feels a conflict swell in him, a desire and a fear of being close to her.

After this visit Nick travels to France, where he meets Widmerpool again and falls fleetingly in love with a girl whom he regards as the French counterpart to Jean. From France, Nick goes up to Oxford. Section four of *A Question of Upbringing* covers his first term there. At Oxford Nick is again with Stringham, who detests university life and is increasingly afflicted with melancholy and drunkenness.

Powell treats Oxford in terms of personality, introducing Nick's life there through Sillery, an elderly don and *éminence grise* figure. Characters who play a large part in subsequent novels are gathered at Sillery's tea parties: Truscott, a graduate of promise; Quiggin, uncouth, belligerent, and provincial; and Mark Members, bohemian, precious, a poet, rumored to come from the same Northern town as Quiggin.

By the end of *A Question of Upbringing* the main themes are stated and the world of *A Dance to the Music of Time* has been created. The next novels enlarge variously on the arts and politics of the period and on social mores, aspects of life of which the narrator, Nick, has as yet so little intimation.

The first part of *A Buyer's Market* is a good example of the conjunction of disparate elements from which Powell's social comedy is structured. Nick sees four

paintings by Edgar Deacon for auction with a conglomeration of other objects that reminds him of Deacon's own shop and home at the time when he knew him well. Deacon is an old acquaintance of Nick's parents. Nick meets him at the Louvre on the day he has tea with the Walpole-Wilsons. Sir Gavin Walpole-Wilson is working at the Peace Conference with Nick's father. Years later Nick sees his first Deacon painting in the Walpole-Wilson house. The importance to Nick of the Walpole-Wilson's "Deacon" is not the quality of the painting but that seeing it always implies the proximity of their niece, Barbara Goring. The auction recalls those years to Nick and also the debutantes' dinner and ball at which he and the socially determined Widmerpool both renounced Barbara.

At the ball, Widmerpool, in an accident of the kind that has dogged him throughout life, is covered in sugar by Barbara. Under the stress of this incident he tells Nick as they walk through London streets that he too was in love with her.

While walking, Nick and Widmerpool meet Deacon at Hyde Park. Deacon, now an old man, is with an attractive but scruffy girl, Gypsy Jones. Gypsy is aggressive, egotistical, and politically extremely left wing. These ill-assorted four go to a coffee stall. There they encounter Stringham, whom neither Widmerpool nor Nick has seen for several years.

The cumulative impact of Powell's work is strengthened by this technique of scattering and reuniting his characters. Their circumstances change, their spheres of influence enlarging or declining as they bring with them on remeeting a new friend or associate who shifts the focus of the narrative.

Stringham takes the other four to Milly Andriadis' party. The party is held in a house rented from Jean Templer's husband, and the guests include Sillery, Prince Theoderic of the Balkans, Sir Magnus Donners, and Bill Truscott, who

works for him. Milly herself, once the mistress of a person of the court, is now Stringham's mistress.

After this strangely fascinating party there is an elegiac description of Nick's walk home which culminates in another unexpected meeting when he runs into Uncle Giles. Before Nick goes to sleep he wonders if he should take his uncle seriously. If he could solve this problem, then possibly other answers in life might be made clear.

Section three of *A Buyer's Market* starts with an assessment of Nick's maturer philosophy of life. He realizes that life is not divided into compartments, but that individual worlds eventually find that they have something common to all. Feeling himself socially isolated for the moment, Nick tries to look up Deacon. Instead, he meets the painter Barnby, whose studio is in Deacon's house. Barnby informs Nick of Widmerpool's involvement with Gypsy Jones and asks if Nick is also an admirer. Barnby himself is engaged on a mural for the Donners-Brebner building and painting a portrait of Baby Wentworth. Thus he finds himself in the delicate situation of courting his patron's mistress.

Subsequently Nick stays at Hinton, the country house of the Walpole-Wilsons. The house party guests visit Stourwater, Sir Magnus Donners' country home, a too perfectly reconstructed medieval castle. Jean Duport is there as a friend of Baby Wentworth and Nick finds himself attracted to her once more. Stringham is engaged. He, Truscott, and Widmerpool are all working for Sir Magnus.

Widmerpool, power-oriented and egotistical, is evidently successful in business but seems doomed to failure with women. He confesses to Nick that Gypsy had been pregnant when he met her and that he had illegally procured her abortion. Attempting to leave Stourwater after a conference with Sir Magnus, Widmerpool has another of his ludicrous

accidents, reversing his car into an ornamental urn and toppling it onto the lawn. Nick concludes that Widmerpool habitually rises, like the phoenix, from the ashes of humiliation.

At the opening of the last section of *A Buyer's Market*, Nick remains an on-looker, an autumn walk impressing on him only a sense of experience endured. Depressed by Stringham's wedding, where the strife it had caused was unsuccessfully concealed, Nick learned the same day of Deacon's death, caused by a fall after a party he had given the week before.

Although Deacon's party was a complete outward contrast to Milly's, inelegant, bohemian, and literary, the same elements of social and sexual strife, ambition, and the reunion of acquaintanceships distinguish it. Mark Members, now an established writer, is brought by an artist's model, Mona. Quiggin had become a friend of Deacon and is much admired by Gypsy for his journalism and left-wing politics. These two are seen to be bound, through their careers, by the bonds of a love-hate relationship.

On the day of Deacon's funeral, Nick finds Gypsy alone. Feeling that they have been projected out of their unrelated selves, he makes love to her. Only then does he realize how like to Barbara Goring Gypsy is. That same evening Nick dines with Widmerpool and his mother, when they both learn of Barbara's totally unexpected engagement.

When he leaves Widmerpool and his mother, Nick suddenly connects in his mind Mrs. Foxe, her secretary, and Milly Andriadis. Such insights into the similarity of people variously connected validates Powell's constant use of chance coincidence. Given Stringham's relationship to these three women, their similarities are psychologically sound.

After this traumatic day Nick's life appears to have meaning. Hardly conscious of what has happened, he begins the trip down the road of life.

Volume Three, *The Acceptance World*, is set in the 1930's, by which time the narrator is deeply involved in work and aware of politics. The change in mood from the 1920's is reflected in supper parties at the Ritz and a rather scruffy weekend at Maidenhead which contrast with pre-ball dinners and country house visits. Nick's friends have altered and hardened in their molds. New anxieties harass them, some predictable, some surprising. The older characters naturally change less.

Nick has tea with his Uncle Giles at his private hotel. His uncle's life was aimless, embattled, and shifty. He constantly enlists Nick in a fruitless attempt to extract more money from the family trust. The country's abandonment of the gold standard and the formation of the National Government annoys Uncle Giles considerably.

This oblique reference to events vital to England not only illustrates Uncle Giles's character but also gives the exact flavor of a historical period without disrupting the atmosphere of a comedy of manners.

After the hotel tea with Uncle Giles, Nick waits for Mark Members at the Ritz. This hotel is described in a passage of soaring fantasy and imagination, the glory of which is subtly modified by Peter Templer's entry.

Templer had married the model Mona, and Nick senses it is not a good marriage. They discuss Stringham's early divorce and his schoolboy imitations of Widmerpool, who, Templer says, is joining the Acceptance World of credit finance. Nick is fascinated by Templer's acceptance of Widmerpool as a normal city acquaintance no longer regarded as a dislikable oddity.

Before Mona and Jean Duport, now separated from her husband, join Peter, Quiggin arrives to see Nick instead of Mark Members. Nick is professionally an art publisher's editor who is trying to obtain an introduction to the painter Isbister's work from St. John Clarke, the nov-

elist for whom Members and Quiggin successively act as secretary. Nick, however, refuses to discuss the introduction with Quiggin that evening.

He dines with the Templers and Jean and spends the weekend with them, at last beginning the inevitable love affair with Jean. Mona is so bored with her life with Peter that she invites Quiggin to Sunday lunch. He accepts, despite worries about leaving St. John Clarke, and is patently irritated by the other guests, Peter's ex-brother-in-law and Mrs. Erdleigh, who appears in some way to be looking after Stripling.

In Chapter Three of *The Acceptance World* Nick's love affair with Jean continues. After the Isbister Memorial exhibition he has a long talk with Members, whose feelings are lacerated by the loss of his post with St. John Clarke. They walk in Hyde Park, where there is a rally for the Hunger Marchers, the unemployed of the 1930's from the North. The march has, for Nick and Members, some preposterous elements. Quiggin is pushing the ailing St. John Clarke in a wheel chair and helping him is Mona.

Powell's treatment of the interest in left-wing politics by intellectuals of the 1930's and of the depressed economy is expanded in a meeting between Nick and Jean with Umfraville, a friend of Stringham's father in Kenya. Umfraville bewails the lack of social life in London; everyone he knows seems to have grown serious. Nick says that the economic slump is the cause. Umfraville takes Nick and his friends to visit Milly Andriadis. Now living in a flat, Milly's changed circumstances—she is keeping a young man who is a German Trotskyite—completes the picture of social decline and political reversals. Nick's second meeting with Milly has the added Powell nuance that it was in Jean's house that he first met her and learned that Jean was married.

In the last section of the book, Nick re-examines Widmerpool's Acceptance World in the light of his own experience. The main part of this section describes an

old boys' reunion dinner. Templer is distressed by his loss of Mona to Quiggin. Stringham is distressingly drunk. Widmerpool is self-important and absorbed in his business success. Nick meets Tolland, who as a member of the large Warminster family plays a part in the subsequent novels.

Powell's stated theme at the beginning of *A Question of Upbringing* is this: people traveling closely together take meaning or lose their meaning, sometimes separating and getting together again to return to the picture of life.

Outlining the variations on this theme

can give only a slight impression of the vitality and variety of the original. Powell's satirical approach to the period gives his novels objectivity, and his appreciation of social nuances and informed vision of human personality give his numerous characters and complex plots richness and clarity. This social and human perceptiveness, combined with a sensitive ear for dialogue and talent for descriptive prose, makes Powell's comic survey of England since World War I the most trenchant and accomplished yet attempted.

A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME: SECOND MOVEMENT

Type of work: A trilogy of novels

Author: Anthony Powell (1905-)

Time: 1914-1939

Locale: London and the country

First published: *At Lady Molly's*, 1957; *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant*, 1960; *The Kindly Ones*, 1962

Principal characters:

NICHOLAS JENKINS, the narrator, a novelist

CHIPS LOVELL, a friend of Nick and nephew of Lord Sleaford

LADY MOLLY JEAVONS, the former Lady Sleaford, an indiscriminate hostess

TED JEAVONS, her husband

GENERAL AYLMER CONYERS, a retired hero of the Boer War

ALFRED LORD WARMINSTER, called "Erridge," an eccentric, left-wing peer

ISOBEL TOLLAND, Erridge's sister, Nick's wife

PRISCILLA TOLLAND, another sister, Chips Lovell's wife

MILDRED BLAIDES HAYCOCK, Lady Jeavons' raffish sister

KENNETH WIDMERPOOL, a school acquaintance of Nick, a financier

J. G. QUIGGIN, a left-wing critic

MARK MEMBERS, Quiggin's friend and rival, a literary critic

HUGH MORELAND, a composer, Nick's friend

MATILDA WILSON, Moreland's wife, an actress

MACKLINTICK, a music critic, the friend and admirer of Moreland

CAROLO, a violinist, Matilda's first husband

PETER TEMPLER, a school friend of Nick

CHARLES STRINGHAM, another friend

MISS TUFFY WEEDON, the former secretary to Stringham's mother, Mrs. Foxe, and guardian of Stringham during his dipsomania

GILES JENKINS, Nick Jenkins' radical and disreputable uncle

BOB DUPORT, the ex-husband of Jean Templer, Nick's former mistress

SIR MAGNUS DONNERS, a great industrialist

At Lady Molly's, *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant*, and *The Kindly Ones*, the three novels that form the second move-

ment of Powell's novel series, treat mainly the years from 1934 to 1939. The first long section of *The Kindly Ones* is

set in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. The first volume, *At Lady Molly's*, is a novel of personalities based on the complex, interrelated, and exceptionally large Sleaford and Tolland families. Nick Jenkins' school and university friends of the first trilogy are mainly minor characters here. *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* subordinates the Tolland-Sleford theme and enlarges on love and marriage and the careers of Nick's friends. The new characters here, notably Moreland and his musical associates, were initially introduced to Nick by Barnby, the painter who was a major character in *A Buyer's Market*. *The Kindly Ones* enlarges the themes of the first two volumes, reconsiders some of Nick's early experiences, and details more specifically the sexual aspects of various relationships. This volume is, however, dominated by the start of the two world wars. This vital political theme is prepared for, in *At Lady Molly's*, by Widmerpool's direct reference to Hitler and in *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* by the involvement sympathetically and actively of several characters in the Spanish Civil War.

The first chapter of *At Lady Molly's* can be read as a self-parody of the structure of Powell's novels where the same characters meet again and again at different times, often after an interval of several years and, outwardly at least, in much changed circumstances. If it is parody it is also a superb justification of Powell's method. The key lines in this reading occur when Lady Molly asks Alfred Tolland if he and Nick are related. She continues by saying that she believes he has more relatives than she, and she has a grandfather who had ninety-seven first cousins and a grandmother with ninety-four.

Thus, the vast network of blood relationships caused by the intermarrying of the Tolland and Sleford families, although their actual contacts are infrequent, is demonstrably more complex even than the ties of love, work, and

friendship among the other characters and is no more involved than the relationship of many old families in England today.

The second important function of Lady Molly Jeavons' party at the start of the second trilogy is that it establishes the decline of society and illustrates exactly how it has declined. The guests are poorer, less smart, less at ease together, even less courteous. They are, in fact, a mixed bunch in which Lady Molly herself symbolizes the whole process of disintegration. Her first marriage was to Lord Sleford, whereby she was mistress of a fabled country house, Dogdene. Her second marriage was to the ex-soldier Jeavons, a fascinating and important character who, nevertheless, has been incapable of earning a living after the Armistice.

Nick's introduction into Lady Molly's world comes through Chips Lovell, her nephew. Nick, by 1934, had left art publishing and is a film script writer. He has also published two novels. Nick meets Mrs. Conyers at Molly's party; she and General Conyers are old friends of Nick's parents. In between the long talks on family by Molly and Tolland, Mrs. Conyers tells Nick that her raffish, twice-married sister, Mrs. Blaides, is to marry again. Her fiancé is the ubiquitous, power-dominated Widmerpool with whom Nick was at school.

Widmerpool lunches Nick at his club and worriedly asks Nick's advice on sleeping with Mildred Blaides before their marriage. That afternoon Nick has tea with General Conyers and his wife. Conyers is equally worried about his own performance on the cello and Widmerpool's ability to "handle" Mildred Blaides. Mrs. Conyer's friend, the widowed Frederica Budd, takes Nick to visit one of her sisters, Norah Tolland, who lives in a reputedly lesbian ménage with Eleanor Walpole-Wilson, the cousin of Nick's, and Widmerpool's, first love. The same evening Nick meets Quiggin, who has eloped with Peter Templer's wife Mona.

He is invited for a weekend at their house in the country.

At Quiggin's house Nick meets the head of the Tolland family, Alfred Warminster, known as Erridge, a young left-wing peer regarded as hopelessly eccentric and irresponsible. He is currently Quiggin's landlord and patron. At dinner with Quiggin and Mona at Thrubworth, the Warminster family home, Nick meets two of Erridge's sisters, Isobel, whom he knows instantly he will marry, and Susan, whose engagement they came to announce.

At Lady Molly's house Nick again meets Miss Tuffy Weedon and learns that his school friend Stringham is practically an alcoholic and being looked after by Tuffy. He meets Jeavons in a pub and joins him in one of Jeavons' periodic wild nights. At a night club run by a Kenya acquaintance of Stringham, Dicky Umfraville, Nick and Jeavons join Widmerpool and Milfred and their host Peter Templer with his new girl friend Betty. Nick learns that Erridge has gone to China, taking Mona with him. Widmerpool's engagement to Mildred is broken after a weekend with her sister, Lady Sleaford, at Dogdene. Lady Molly holds an engagement party for Nick and Isobel. There Nick meets Members, Quiggin's rival in the literary world. He also has a discussion with General Conyers, who is studying psychology, concerning Widmerpool's sexual incompetence; the general accurately classifies Widmerpool as an intuitive extrovert.

In *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant*, the dowager Lady Warminster, stepmother to the nine Tollands, replaces her sister Molly Jeavons as a dominant character from an earlier era. The main character in this novel is the musician Moreland. Standing outside a blitzed pub, the Mortimer, Nick remembers meeting Moreland and his friends there with Deacon, the antique dealer of *A Buyer's Market*. Moreland asks Nick which *three* wives he would choose from their girl friends. Nick, still in love with Templer's sister,

Jean Duport, answers at random. Moreland refuses names but says he intends to marry. Nick, Barnby, Moreland, two music critics, Gossage and Macklintick, and the violinist Carolo, dine at Casanova's and discuss women. Moreland invites Nick to a performance of *The Duchess of Malfi*. In this play Matilda Wilson plays the Cardinal's mistress. She had herself been the mistress of Sir Magnus Donners, who at one time employed Stringham and Widmerpool. Backstage, Nick meets Matilda and Norman Chandler, a homosexual dancer and actor for whom Mrs. Foxe, Stringham's mother, has developed an intense affection. Matilda marries Moreland. A year later Nick marries Isobel.

At Lady Warminster's the elderly novelist, St. John Clarke, is the only non-family lunch guest. Isobel is in a hospital following a miscarriage. Erridge has gone to Spain, leaving St. John Clarke to deal with his political affairs in England. Tuffy and Stringham are living in a flat in Lady Molly's house. Norman continues to influence Mrs. Foxe. When Nick visits Isobel in the hospital, he meets Moreland, whose wife is having a baby, Widmerpool, who is having treatment for boils, and Brandreth, the physician who is treating them all. Moreland takes Nick to visit the Macklinticks. Their relationship is bitter and abusive, the atmosphere exacerbated by the presence of Carolo as lodger. Nick takes Widmerpool to lunch at his club. Widmerpool, who favors appeasement with Germany, is excited by his new acquaintance with preabdication royal society.

Because Isobel and Matilda have become close friends, the Morelands and the Jenkinse are together a great deal. Matilda's baby died at birth. Moreland finishes a new symphony. Mrs. Foxe arranges a party to celebrate the first performance of the symphony. At the party the Macklinticks have an appalling quarrel and Nick is embarrassed when Matilda intimates that Moreland is in love with Priscilla, Isobel's sister. Stringham,

escaped from Miss Weedon's care, arrives at his mother's house in the middle of the party. He is fairly sober, evidently because he is kept without money. Tuffy arrives and gently maneuvers him home. Chips Lovell reports to Nick Widmerpool's distress at the abdication.

St. John Clarke dies and both Quiggin and Members write obituaries. Nick and Isobel see less of the Morelands because of Priscilla. Erridge returns from Spain. Nick and Moreland visit Macklintick, who is deeply depressed; he has lost his job and his wife has left him with Carolo. Two days after their visit he commits suicide. This shock leads Moreland to give up Priscilla. Erridge inherits St. John Clarke's estate. Priscilla and Chips Lovell become engaged.

Casanova's Chinese Restaurant contains hints of the approaching holocaust. *The Kindly Ones* begins just before World War I bursts on an almost wholly unaware Britain.

Nick's family lives at Stonehurst near his father's army post. He is about seven years old and fascinated when he learns that Stonehurst is supposed to be haunted. He gossips with Albert, the handyman-cook, Bracey, his father's army servant, and the neurotic parlor maid Billson. One Sunday there he remembers forever. General and Mrs. Conyers are expected to lunch. Before church, Albert gives notice. Nick's father receives a telegram notifying him of Uncle Giles' arrival in the afternoon, news which infuriates him. After lunch Billson, distracted by the ghosts and the fact that Albert is leaving to marry, arrives in the drawing room, naked, to give notice. General Conyers leads her away wrapped in a shawl snatched from the grand piano. As they start to drive home, the Conyers are stopped by Dr. Trelawney and his followers. Trelawney, who has a sinister reputation, is the leader of a strange religious group; General Conyers has known him for years. While they talk, Giles arrives and announces that Archduke Franz Ferdinand has been assassinated.

Only General Conyers realizes war is now imminent.

In the late 1930's everyone is obsessed by the probability of war while continuing, until 1939, to lead their usual lives. Matilda has returned to acting, but, believing she is inadequate, retires again. The Morelands move to a country cottage near Stourwater. Just after "Munich," Isobel and Matilda meet. The Jenkinsons go to the Morelands' cottage for the weekend. While there, they are invited to Stourwater for dinner. Peter Templer collects them in his car. Peter is now married to Betty, who is in a state of mental collapse. Anne Umfraville is Sir Magnus' new mistress. After dinner the guests act the Seven Deadly Sins, which Sir Magnus photographs. Widmerpool, in uniform, arrives to discuss a job for Bob Duport with Sir Magnus. Templer accepts the fact that he is now Widmerpool's inferior in the city. Stringham is said to be acting as the agent at Glimber, his mother's country home, with Tuffy Weedon.

A few weeks later Uncle Giles dies in a seaside hotel run by Albert. Nick goes to attend to his funeral. Bob Duport and Dr. Trelawney are staying in the same hotel. During an evening of drinking Duport discusses his ex-wife Jean's infidelities with Nick, who discovers that while she was in love with him she was also having an affair with Jimmy Brent. Duport says he loathes Widmerpool, who had ruined the job he was doing in Turkey for Sir Magnus. Dr. Trelawney is attended by Mrs. Erdleigh, the spiritualist friend of Uncle Giles, whose money she inherits.

When Nick returns from Uncle Giles' funeral, he arranges for Isobel, who is pregnant, to live with Frederica in the country during the early months of the war. Anxious to get into the army as an officer, he applies to General Conyers for help. He can do nothing for Nick but announces his own engagement, his wife having died a short time before, to Tuffy Weedon. She tells Nick that Stringham is now cured of his dipsomania. Nick

asks Widmerpool to help him get into the war. Widmerpool says that this is impossible, but he requests Nick to visit Lady Molly's with him and his mother. At Lady Molly's, Nick encounters Jeavons' brother Stanley, an army officer who promises to find Nick's paper and obtain his commission. Moreland is staying at Lady Molly's. Moreland is in a state of collapse because Matilda has left him. At dinner they meet Quiggin, Members, and Anne Umfraville. Nick reflects that another stage of life has now passed as on the memorable day at Stonehurst.

In *The Kindly Ones*, Nick observes that understatement and overstatement sometimes hit upon truth better than a flat declaration of fact. This, of course, is exactly Powell's method of creating truth by understatement or overstatement, both in description of events and in characterization. Powell's many paired characters contrast so vividly that taken as a whole they form a succinct cross section of humanity. General Conyers and Mr. Jeavons provide an excellent example. Both spent the early years of their maturity in the army. Both married women younger than themselves. The general, however, is specifically a man of action. Seemingly born to command, he has a superb knack of handling people and situations. His knowledge and awareness grow with the years. He studies psychoanalysis intelligently, reads modern fiction, and plays the cello with fervor; one of the oldest characters in the novels, he is thoroughly modern. Jeavons, on the other hand, has never advanced since 1918. Unemployable, he appears to live in a vague mist, permanently missing the point of whatever is happening. Subject to the occasional binge, he plays a more usual role by being prodded into pouring drinks at his wife's parties.

Nick Jenkins and Widmerpool are another pair who meet constantly and unexpectedly. Each is suspicious of everything the other most values. Widmerpool, gauche and unattractive, is determined to live by the will, snobbish, ambitious, im-

pervious to any aesthetic pleasure or values. His pursuit of power is so single-minded that he soon outstrips his seemingly more talented and charming contemporaries. To Nick, the arts and personal relationships are the most important aspects of life, yet he recognizes Widmerpool's drive toward success and even ceases to be surprised by it. Widmerpool, however, remains amazed at Nick's drifting and lack of seriousness. General Conyers describes Widmerpool's objective orientation as a need to be always on the move after some definite thing. But it could be doing harm to a person in ordinary life when it affects what his personal objectives may be. The general, of course, is right; Widmerpool's relationships with women, except with his adored mother, are always disastrous. The subjective, emotionally analytic Nick, on the other hand, makes a successful marriage before he is thirty.

Love and marriage in Powell's novels are also treated with either exaggeration or understatement. There is an extraordinarily high incidence of marital and sexual failure among Nick's friends. Temple, Stringham, Moreland, Macklintick, and Quiggin have all been divorced or separated by the end of *The Kindly Ones*. The successful relationships are only obliquely treated. Nick's courtship and marriage to Isobel are implied to be worthwhile. The Jeavonses and General Conyers and his wife are said to be happily married. But Nick's relationship with Jean, felt at the time to be wonderful and treated in depth, is later shown to have been a travesty of love. Although this development follows Tolstoy's dictum that happy marriages are all alike and only the unhappy ones are interesting, the overall effect of this treatment is to make love and marriage appear insubstantial and precarious.

This attitude toward love is in accord with Powell's whole philosophy of the total uncertainty of existence, its kaleidoscopic quality, and the necessity of constant revaluation if any meaning is to be

extracted from the patterns in life. For if life and its significance are uncertain they are for Powell certainly patterned, and only by studying the pattern can any meaning be extracted. "Time" is of course the key word of the series, and Powell often uses a work of art as a touchstone for reflections of time. The same work of art, Bernini's *Truth Unveiled by Time*, is mentioned twice in *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* when the same people are together, once in a seedy pub, and once at Mrs. Foxe's party for Moreland. On the first occasion Deacon refers to the figure; on the second he examines a cast of the work with Nick at a party. These contrasting scenes, separated by several years, built around the same object, characterize the whole of Powell's work. The same characters in

contrasting environments, the one object eliciting totally different responses, the preoccupation with time and with values: these are constant aspects of every novel. The two methods, direct speech and the narrator's observations, mingling sadness and satire, illustrate Powell's style at its resonant best.

The importance of *A Dance to the Music of Time* increases with every new volume because of the superb balance Anthony Powell maintains in his complex literary structure. Each volume adds significance to the preceding ones and propels the reader eagerly forward to the novels which will follow. Still incomplete, the series has already established a place in the English tradition of great comic novels.

DANTE

Type of work: Critical essay
Author: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)
First published: 1929

In his poetry T. S. Eliot experimented with a number of techniques, one of the best known of these being the persistent use of direct and indirect allusions to other poets and poetry. These allusions are from an impressively wide range of sources, but one of the most important sources is the poetry of Dante.

The epigraph of Eliot's first volume of poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, is from the *Purgatorio*, while the epigraph to the poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," is from the *Inferno*. There are a number of allusions to these sections of *The Divine Comedy* in *The Waste Land*, and Eliot himself identifies them in his "Notes on 'The Waste Land.'" One of the central images of "The Hollow Men" is the "Multifoliate rose," which had been for Dante a symbol of Paradise, and which for Eliot represents the only hope of the hollow man. There are allusions to Dante's poetry

scattered throughout Eliot's work. In "Little Gidding," the final section of Eliot's last great work of poetry, *Four Quartets*, the long concluding passage of Section II is, as Eliot himself said, intended to be as close an equivalent as possible to a canto of the *Inferno* or the *Purgatorio*.

The point need hardly be stressed: there is value in this study of Dante, not only for the student of Dante, but for the student of Eliot as well. In the preface to *Dante*, Eliot writes that this work is an account of his own acquaintance with the Italian poet's writings. Eliot himself acknowledges that the acquaintance has been, for him, a fruitful one because he had found no other poet to whom he could refer so frequently and for so many purposes in his own work. His essay is in no way, he emphasizes, to be considered as a definitive statement on Dante; he did not regard himself as a scholar. Instead, his intention is to deal with Dante's im-

portance as a master poet and as a figure of interest to anyone concerned with modern poetry.

The first point Eliot makes about Dante is that he is, even for non-Italians, surprisingly easy to read because of his universality, even in the modern languages. But that is not to say that he is the greatest poet, or the poet who has dealt with more that is common to all men. Dante's universality, in the sense that Eliot is using the term, is a result of his particular time and place, and of the language and poetic traditions afforded him by that time and place.

The Italian language of Dante's day was the product of the universal language, Latin. Medieval Latin was universal in that in it men of various lands and languages found a common means of communication. And in the Italian vernacular that Dante used such universality is also evident. Other languages are more localized: the associations of words belong more to a particular culture or race. But Dante's culture is not so much Italian as it is European, and his language is equally universal (meaning European). The language of Shakespeare was more localized; he had no way to express himself other than in a local fashion.

Europe, in Dante's time, was intellectually more closely joined than we realize, and its unity was not simply a matter of a universal language. Dante's method and thought were commonly known and generally understood throughout Europe because of the common culture of medieval times. That method, that poetic tradition, was allegory, and allegory makes for simplicity and lucidity of style.

Because allegory, as Dante used it in *The Divine Comedy*, is in itself one great metaphor, Dante employed few metaphorical images within the work itself: his effort was chiefly to make us see. What few metaphors he employs, therefore, enable us to visualize a given scene; they are explanatory and intensive. Shakespeare's metaphors, by way of contrast, are expansive and even decorative;

they add to what we see rather than making us see more clearly.

So far Eliot bases his statements on his understanding of the *Inferno*, and the point he draws from his reading of that work is that great poetry may be written with strict economy of words, figures of speech, and elegance of style. The point he wishes to make about the *Purgatorio* is that great poetry can also be made from direct philosophical statement.

The *Purgatorio* is, says Eliot, the most difficult of the three parts of *The Divine Comedy*, and there are several reasons for this. Not only is it true that damnation is more dramatic than purgation; it is also true that the allegory in the *Inferno* is more visual, more rooted in the concrete, than is that of the *Purgatorio*. The *Inferno* can be enjoyed by itself; the *Purgatorio* cannot. It can only be fully understood and appreciated as a part of the whole work.

The greatest difficulty with the *Purgatorio*, for the modern mind, is accepting the terms of Dante's philosophical and theological beliefs. But we must accept them if we are to understand and accept the whole of Dante's vision. We can no more ignore the philosophy and theology than we can the allegory. But Eliot distinguishes between philosophical *belief* and poetic *assent*, and it is the latter that we need. He says that what is needed in appreciation of the *Purgatorio* is not belief, but willing suspension of belief. One must enter, in effect, the world of thirteenth century religious faith, and we cannot enter that world, we cannot appreciate the poem, unless we accept as *given* the philosophy and theology which are essential to it—literally, of its essence.

The point Eliot wishes to make about the *Paradiso* is that the state of beatitude, though rarefied, can also be the substance for great poetry. Our age finds it difficult to appreciate the *Paradiso* because of the prevailing prejudice against beatitude as material for poetry. For Dante, the difficulty in treating this sort of subject mat-

ter was the necessity of allowing us to apprehend it sensuously. That, from Eliot's point of view, Dante succeeded in overcoming this difficulty is obvious. The secret of Dante's power and success lies in his ability to express the almost inapprehensible in concrete, visual images.

In this study Eliot continually measures Dante's stature as poet against the usual standard, Shakespeare. His comparison of the two poets results in the conclusion that Shakespeare shows breadth in the variety of human life and passion he presents, but that Dante achieves greater depths and heights of degradation and exaltation. *The Divine Comedy* gives us the complete range of human emotion.

The last section of *Dante* is on the *Vita Nuova*, which Eliot describes as a series of poems connected by a "vision-literature" prose. This youthful work is

important to Eliot chiefly because it aids in an understanding of *The Divine Comedy*." Paradoxically, however, it is *The Divine Comedy* that we should read first because it introduces us to the world of medieval imagery, thought, and dogma. The *Vita Nuova*, on the other hand, introduces us to the medieval sensibility. It is constructed of materials which are generally acknowledged to be based, in some degree, on Dante's own experience, but these materials are transformed by being placed in a larger perspective than the merely personal one. On reflection, the attraction of the poet toward Beatrice is seen as a manifestation of something greater; the attraction toward God. From an understanding of Dante's method in the *Vita Nuova* we can come to a clearer understanding of Dante's method, on a far greater scale, in *The Divine Comedy*.

DE PROFUNDIS

Type of work: An apologia in the form of a letter

Author: Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)

First published: 1905, 1908

The eighty-page manuscript of this letter rests in the British Museum. It was written in Reading Gaol on prison paper during the last months, from January to March, of Wilde's two-year sentence for "unnatural practices." It was addressed to Lord Alfred Douglas, but when Wilde was not allowed to send it from prison he handed it to his friend Robert Ross the day after he was released on May 19, 1897, with instructions to type a copy and send the original to Lord Alfred, who always claimed he never received it. Part of the work was first published under Ross's title, *De Profundis*, in 1905, and again in 1908. A typescript was given by Ross to Vyvyn Holland, Wilde's younger son, who published it in 1949. Rupert Hart-Davis has shown in *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* that this first complete edition contained hundreds of errors, and he has now published the manuscript after it was released by the British Museum from

the fifty-year restriction Ross placed on it when he deposited the manuscript in 1909. As a letter it becomes the center of the definitive edition of Wilde's letters; in the shorter form edited by Ross it is both an *apologia pro vita sua* and a literary essay. Nevertheless, in its entirety it has a unity and a unique value as Wilde's testament to his life as an artist which should encourage its publication for the first time as an independent work of art under the title which is customarily given it.

Since it is cast in the form of an epistle, the work needs for full understanding some contextual reference to Wilde's life and works before and after his imprisonment and the composition of the letter. The prison sentence marked the end of his marriage, his income, and his life in England; thereafter he lived in exile as Sebastian Melmoth. One link with the past, however, was not broken,

the association with Lord Alfred Douglas. Wilde's return to the young man, the cause of his imprisonment, divorce, and bankruptcy, and to the kind of associates whose evidence had convicted him, seems to invalidate the promise to lead a new life with which *De Profundis* closes. Wilde claimed, however, that on the one hand the conditions of exile, disgrace, and penury drove him to those acquaintances, and on the other they were the creations of his art and not the conditions of his life. Wilde's one conviction was that he was an artist and he doggedly transposed the terms of life and art. His term for the new life was the *Vita Nuova* of Dante; similarly *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* was to be the parable of his life and more true to life (because more artistic) than his biography. The strain of maintaining this paradox ended his life three years after his release and finished his writing career shortly after the composition of *De Profundis*. The resolution of the paradox is the intention of the long letter.

This epistle is therefore connected both with Wilde's biography (in which sense it is autobiography) and with his literary canon. In the letter he suggests that his sentence and fate are "prefigured" in works like *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*; the immediate artistic fruits of the "new life" are the two letters to the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, his only writing after *De Profundis*; parts of the last amount to a prose poem somewhere between the prose of the two letters and poetry of the ballad, Wilde's longest and most effective poem. The two letters are included in Ross's 1908 edition and show plainly the real conditions under which *De Profundis* was written; Wilde sums them up as constant hunger, diarrhea from the rotten food, and insomnia from the diarrhea and the plank bed in his cell.) His description of prison life is vivid and awful; out of his experience, immediately after his release, he showed courage in writing letters to defend a discharged warder and to plead for decent treatment of child

prisoners. Perhaps he could have played a prominent role in prison reform had not exile intervened; yet it is difficult to see Wilde in that role unless he really meant what he said in *De Profundis*. As it was, events showed that this epistle belonged to the realm of art and not to life.

Wilde's request to have the letter copied by Ross showed that he thought of it as art, his "letter to the world"; the covering letter to Ross described his three intentions: he would explain, not defend, his past; describe his spiritual and mental crisis in prison; and outline his future plans. The aptness of Ross's title from Psalm 130 is obvious, but the work is not so much the salvation of a lost soul as Wilde's artistic equivalent, the groping toward an artistic resolution of a paradox: the pursuit of beauty leads to the ugliness of Reading Gaol. The past is disposed of mostly in the longer first half of the letter, in reproaches to Lord Alfred Douglas which were at least half merited but relevant only if Wilde recognized Lord Alfred as the alter ego of that past and not of the future. This failure to interpret his past life as a work of art indicates the failure of the remaining portion of the letter, printed in Ross's edition of 1908.

This general section of *De Profundis* is in two related parts. The first states Wilde's reliance on the paradox that art is life, life art; his problem is to see the art in his present situation, which he sums up in the word "sorrow." If he really feels sorrow, then sorrow must be artistic or of artistic value; he decides that his art (that is, life) lacked the dimension of shadow (that is, sorrow), and his present sorrow must have been intended for the purpose of improving his art. If Wilde can transpose his prison sentence into an aspect of art, then his paradox holds good. We have evidence in the letters of his friends that he did just this soon after his release, when he wittily described Reading Gaol as an enchanted castle, complete with ogres, dungeons, and devices of torture.

The second part of this section then

plays with an artistic creation or symbol of sorrow: The Man of Sorrows, by which Wilde intended himself, Christ, and all men to the limited extent that he could be interested in anyone but himself. He pursues the Christian analogy daringly (even blasphemously) to argue not that he is Christ but that Christ (like Wilde) was the supreme artist of life: He had the imagination to feel the sufferings of a leper without being that leper, while at the same time He preserved His individuality. Similarly, His sympathetic imagination and artistry compelled Him to turn Himself into an artistic symbol of the truth about life: The Man of Sorrows. Wilde is thus not serving a prison sentence; as an artist he is creating an artistic (that is, symbolic) statement about life. In this way he is able to absorb the most "sorrowful" experience of his life, the half-hour he stood on the center platform at Clapham Junction on his way to Reading Gaol and endured the mockery of the populace.

Having accomplished this artistic stroke (and advised Lord Alfred as a fellow poet to do likewise), Wilde proposes the two subjects on which he would like now to write. The first, the presentation of Christ as the forerunner of the Romantic movement in life, was largely covered in his outrageous analogy above; its extension here leads him to the proposition that the sinner is as near perfect

Man as we can know because in repenting he can actually alter his past; thus he is the artist of the present and the past.

The second subject, the life of art considered in relation to conduct of life, is much more the nub of Wilde's attitude to his past and his future. As he admits, everybody will simply point to Reading Gaol as the logical conclusion of the artistic life as Wilde practiced it. He dodges the logic by three lofty assertions. He is now so much the repentant sinner that he can even pity those who mocked him at Clapham Junction; that it was reliance on the Philistines (that is, the original legal action he instituted against Queensbury) that brought him to Reading Gaol; that the supreme concern of the artist is what he says of himself, not what others say. His own statements, Wilde asserted, must be the truth because what he says will be an artistic creation.

Thus Wilde's perverse reading of the obvious analogies in the Christian story made him miss its whole point of sacrifice (though he considers he was sacrificed for Lord Alfred) and confirms his original paradox, absolves him from all blame, and nullifies the whole meaning of Reading Gaol. The artist had triumphed over his real situation but only at the cost of life itself. Wilde's enormous egotism prevented him from seeing the pain he had caused others. All he could appreciate was an artistically crucified Wilde.

A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

Type of work: Novel

Author: James Agee (1909-1955)

Time: 1915

Locale: Knoxville, Tennessee

First published: 1957

Principal characters:

RUFUS FOLLET, a six-year-old boy

MARY FOLLET, his mother

JAY FOLLET, his father

CATHERINE, his small sister

JOEL LYNCH, Mary Follet's father

CATHERINE LYNCH, his wife

AMELIA and

ANDREW LYNCH, Mary's sister and brother

Perhaps the most significant aspect of *A Death in the Family* is the fact that it restored a world of feeling and moral value to American fiction. A Pulitzer Prize winner for 1957, it is a novel about love that is neither adult lust nor adolescent groping, about death as an inescapable part of the human condition, universal and therefore to be borne. In a very real but almost old-fashioned sense the book is a celebration of these two great mysteries of experience. At a time when most writers choose to treat of love as a process of glandular secretions and death as a meaningless commonplace of violence, nothing in this novel reveals the originality and power of James Agee more than this ability to suggest the atmosphere of wonder and awe which once surrounded man's awareness of his being and his mortality.

The essential difference found between James Agee and our leading specialists in primitivism and violence goes even deeper. *A Death in the Family* is a novel of compassion almost overwhelming in its sensitivity, a circumstance not entirely accounted for by its autobiographical theme and the writer's obvious attempt to get at the meaning of the central experience in his own life, the death of his father forty-odd years before. He is not dealing with that form of compassion which has left its mark on much recent fiction, the subverted sentimentality of a growing concern for the alcoholic, the inarticulate brute, the lonely spinster, the inadequate male, the lost child, the homosexual, the bum—all the misfits and outcasts of our society. His compassion is for simple, decent people of ordinary lives—the very “ordinariness” of his material is one of the notable features of the novel—in a time of loss and grief. These are matters that he presents with a feeling of shared sorrow and sympathy for what is most personal and yet most general in the human situation.

Agee's sense of experience shared pre-

supposes a universe of social continuity and moral order, not a world in which the values of the moment must be salvaged from the spectacle of fragmented, isolated lives within a disordered society, but one in which the human effort, in spite of its accumulation of grief, hunger, and waste, becomes meaningful and worthwhile when judged by community values and the idea of man's moral responsibility as man. As a serious writer Agee was interested in the nature of good and evil; in his novel death, the complement of life, is the chink in the armor that gives a small boy his first awareness of evil and threatens with the shock of loss a family in which the ties of kinship have been fulfilled by love. That he was able to shape on a purely domestic level a fable of compelling tenderness and compassionate insight, or to achieve within this framework his effects of lyricism, meditative speculation, and drama, is proof that James Agee's death lost to American letters one of the resourceful and authentic talents of his generation.

Behind this novel, however, lay years of preparation and apprentice work in a variety of media within the fairly short span of his writing career. He was born in Knoxville, the setting of *A Death in the Family*, in 1909, and he died of a heart attack in a New York taxicab in 1955. After schooling at Exeter and Harvard he had joined the staff of *Fortune* in 1932. His first book was *Permit Me Voyage*, a collection of poems published in the Yale Younger Poets Series in 1934. This verse was rather conventional in form, romantic in its display of strong personal feeling. As poetry written in a period of technical experiment and at a time when writers were expected to carry banners in the picket lines of the class war, the book, like *A Death in the Family*, seemed strangely old-fashioned. (Archibald MacLeish's somewhat ambiguous comment was that Agee had not

assumed ■ "Position.") Later, out of an assignment to write a documentary report on the sharecropping system in the South, he produced one of the most original but least read books of its decade, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, a curious blend of narrative, social history, satire, and philosophy. It is in many ways a youthful book but an impressive one in its praise of the American earth and its rage against the exploiters of the land and its workers. As a social document the book is still eloquent and moving, even though the first impression is likely to be one of tremendous power of language under poor control. Still later he wrote about motion pictures for *The Nation*, critiques which have become the classics of their kind, and reviewed books for *Time*. In 1948 he gave up journalism to devote himself to *A Death in the Family*, but he was constantly being diverted to other tasks: articles for *Life*, scenarios for *The Quiet One*, *The African Queen*, *Face to Face*, *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*, *The Night of the Hunter*, a documentary on the life of Lincoln for television, and the novella, *The Morning Watch*, published in 1950.

Although Agee came late to fiction, his admirers saw in *The Morning Watch*, a moving study of adolescent confusion against the background of a boys' school, promise of the major work of which he was capable. *A Death in the Family* almost fulfills that promise. When Agee died in 1955 his novel was virtually complete except for the tying in of loose ends and the final polishing. In preparing the manuscript for publication the editors have inserted as thematic interludes several episodes not directly related to the time-scheme of the novel and have added as a prologue the sketch titled "Knoxville: Summer 1915," which had been written some years before. It is safe to say that if Agee had lived he would have given his book greater structural unity and might have recast in more dramatic form several sections which remain static in effect. It is doubtful, however, if he

could have improved upon the rich contrasts of texture conveyed in characterization, mood, and scene, or refined to greater precision the beautiful clarity of his style.

As an introductory piece, "Knoxville: Summer 1915" creates the mood of affectionate reminiscence within which the novel is embodied. It is a twilight study of a summer evening when children play around the corner lampposts and men in shirt sleeves sprinkle their lawns after supper. Later crickets chirp in the early dark that seems filled with stars as a small boy lies with his father, mother, uncle, and aunt on quilts that have been spread on the grass in the back yard. This is the enchanted world of childhood as it appeared to young Rufus Follet: safe, warm, secure, a world of protection and understanding and love.

Rufus and his younger sister Catherine are asleep when the telephone rings summoning his father to the country, where his Grandfather Follet has been taken suddenly ill. The ties of family relationships, intimate, trivial, amusing, tender, are evoked as Jay Follet prepares to start out before daybreak and his wife Mary gets up to cook his breakfast. Because he expects to be back in time for supper he leaves without waking the children. They are asleep the next night when the telephone rings again and a stranger's voice tells Mary that her husband has been in an accident; on the way back from the country the steering mechanism of his car had broken and Jay, thrown clear when the car left the road, had been killed instantly. This, in outline, is the story of *A Death in the Family*, but not its whole substance. More important is the effect of death on the people involved. To Mary it brings the realization that death happens to many people and is very common. In her distress she turns to her faith for consolation. To Rufus his father's death is not the maturing experience it will eventually become, but only another baffling circumstance among the mysteries of his young life, like his night-

mares, his mother's command that he must never mention the color of a Negro nursemaid's skin, the memory of a visit made a short time before to see his withered old great-great-grandmother in the country, or the reason why older boys ask him his name and then break into laughter and run away. Yet he knows that the event gives him some importance that he had never known before: slowly, to himself, he repeats the fact that his father is dead. Catherine is too young to understand her loss or her mother's sorrow. And beyond these is the widening circle of family: Grandfather Lynch, the agnostic; deaf Grandmother Lynch; Great-aunt Hannah, a tower of strength; Andrew, the sharp-tongued artist uncle, and his sister Amelia; weak, drunken Uncle Ralph Follet, the undertaker, who asks to prepare his own brother's body for burial. These people give the novel its texture, establishing the world in which adults and children confront the fact of death while trying to understand its meaning in terms of grief and love.

The novel contains memorable passages in which deep feeling is combined with power and precision of language, as in the account of the relationship between father and son unfolded as Jay and

Rufus walk slowly home after seeing a Charlie Chaplin movie, in the scene in which Great-aunt Hannah and Rufus go shopping and he wears down an adult's reasonable firmness with his small boy's persistence over the purchase of a loud-checked cap, in the moment when the mourning family seems to sense the dead man's presence in the house, and in the scene in which young Rufus, eager to display his new cap, runs to his parents' bedroom and sees that his father is not there. Instead, he finds his mother propped up on two pillows, looking as if she were sick or tired.

James Agee began as a poet and he never lost a poet's eye for the telling detail or the poet's ear. *A Death in the Family* contains passages which, even out of context, show the true quality of a writer to whom literature was a total job of action and feeling, of sights and sounds, of image and meaning, of language and mood. The book is not a perfect novel, perhaps not even a major work, but in the universality of its theme and the compassion which it invokes it uncovers a world of feeling in which all may share. This is more than the truth-telling for which the realist strives; it is truth itself.

THE DEATH OF ARTEMIO CRUZ

Type of work: Novel

Author: Carlos Fuentes (1929-)

Time: 1889-1959

Locale: Mexico

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

ARTEMIO CRUZ, a dying tycoon

CATALINA, his wife

LORENZO, his son, killed in the Spanish Civil War

TERESA, his daughter

GLORIA, his granddaughter

GERARDO, his son-in-law

DON GAMALIEL BERNAL, his father-in-law

GONZALO BERNAL, a young lawyer executed by Villistas

FATHER PÁEZ, a priest

REGINA, a dead woman Artemio had loved

LILIA and

LAURA, Artemio's mistresses

To the thinking Mexican, the Revolution of 1910 is the great and inescapable fact in his country's destiny and his own personal identity. A second conquest of the land and the past, it was the climax of four centuries of turbulent history and the adumbration of all that has happened since. For the revolution did more than topple the paternal dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz; it tore a nation apart by fratricidal strife and then put it together again in a strange new way that continues to disturb and puzzle its citizens. It swept away lingering remnants of colonialism, brought into being a revolutionary oligarchy still in power, created a new middle class, moved Mexico ahead into the twentieth century, helped to shape a literature both ancestral and prophetic in its pictures of a sad and violent land. And its force is still unspent.

In some ways this situation is comparable to the aftermath of the Civil War in the United States, where Americans are still trying to see their own fraternal conflict in perspectives of cause and consequence. Among Southerners, especially, we find a sense of the uniqueness of the regional experience, a response to events viewed imaginatively as a national tragedy. A somewhat similar spirit prevails in certain areas of Mexican life, but on a greater scale, complicated by a growing belief that the revolution has failed and that the real revolution is still to come. In fact, the Mexican intellectual today is often self-conscious in much the same manner that Faulkner and writers of his generation were self-conscious: obsessed by feeling for place, burdened by the past, uneasy in the new society, seeking to reclaim in their stories and poems old values lost in the processes of change. Feeling that history has isolated him in his own particular moment in time, the parochialism of the revolution, the Mexican writer often turns inward to create a literature that veers between moods of

fury and outrage and the poetry of nocturnal silence. He lives, to borrow a phrase from the poet Octavio Paz, in a "labyrinth of solitude." It was José Luis Cuevas, the *avant-garde* painter, who first used the term "Cactus Curtain" in protest against the isolation of the Mexican artist. In an earlier novel, *Where the Air Is Clear*, Carlos Fuentes said that it is impossible to explain Mexico. Instead, the artist believes in it with anger and a feeling of outrage, with passion, and with a sense of alienation.

This statement carries the reader a long way toward an understanding of Carlos Fuentes' fiction. It is clear that he has rejected Mexican life as it is constituted today, but at the same time he uses it in his novels to test his sensuous powers and dramatic vigor. The country he writes about is not the land that tourists see or a land of tradition; it is the country of art, a place and people transformed by compelling imagination into something rich and strange and meaningful. This is one reason for his restless experiments with technique, the broken narrative structures, the shifting points of view, his lovely, solemn hymns to landscapes and time, the interior monologues by which he tries to probe the national conscience as well as the consciousness of his people. If he has not yet assimilated in his own writing the influences he has absorbed from such varied figures as Proust, Joyce, Faulkner, Dos Passos, and Wolfe, he has nevertheless put his borrowings to brilliant use in catching the tempo of Mexican life in its present stage of uncertainty and indirection.

Although his methods may vary in his discontinuity of form and the labyrinthine turnings of his style, his theme remains constant, for his novels are studies in the responsibility which power, knowingly or unknowingly, brings and the corruption which almost necessarily accompanies power. He began with *Where the*

Air Is Clear, a novel set against the background of Mexico City. There the extremes of poverty and wealth allowed a study in breadth of what has happened on all levels of society after the revolution failed to fulfill its promises. Central to Señor Fuentes' theme is Federico Robles, once an ardent revolutionary but now a driving power in the country's political and financial life. His rise in the world, through treachery, bribery, ruthless exploitation, and the corruption of better men, has made him many enemies. The novel tells the story of his fall. But more than one man's ruin is involved in the panoramic picture presented. Behind the events of the story the failed revolution throws long shadows into the present, the realization of wasted effort, of lives lost to no purpose, of high aims given over to meaningless deeds of sensuality, folly, and outrage. Robles is what he is, as we see at the end, because others in their selfishness and pride have assisted in his rise. Now they hate him because they see in him an enlarged image of themselves. *Where the Air Is Clear* is saved from becoming an ideological polemic by its roots that reach downward toward much that is flawed and gross in the human condition.

Fuentes tells much the same story in *The Good Conscience*, although here his concern is with a family, grandfather, father, and son, rather than a single individual. The setting is Guanajuato, where the oldest of the Ceballos, a dry-goods merchant, laid the foundation of a family fortune. Representative of the new middle class, the materialistic, ambitious Ceballos men marry for position, play a cynical political game for security, carry on their shady business deals for gain. Society accepts them; the State protects them; the Church sustains them. The writer's picture of chicanery and corruption is magnificent up to a point. But the book breaks abruptly in the middle to present in Jaime Ceballo, the youngest of the family, a study of adolescent confusion and rebellion. Torn between the self-seeking practices of his family and the

teachings of the Church, he attempts to follow the example of Christ, fails, and falls back on radicalism as the only alternative to the greed, lust for power, and hypocrisy of his class. The ending is unconvincing after the ironical, somber overtones orchestrated through the earlier sections of the novel. The reader feels that the writer's own Marxist beliefs rather than the logic of character and experience dictated an ending that seems more contrived than real.

The Death of Artemio Cruz is the most limited presentation of this theme that Fuentes has attempted to date. True, the book is flawed by his bewildering cross-chronology, the points of view constantly shifting and intermingling, and his varied stylistic effects. In the end, however, the novel rises above its faults in its compelling picture of one man's life and the relation of that life to all the years of disorder and change that have conditioned the course of Mexican history from the beginning of the century to the present day. Again this central figure is a force in the land, a millionaire who has climbed to his position of wealth and power by violence, blackmail, bribery, brutal exploitation of the workers. Like Federico Robles, he is a former revolutionist who stands for the Mexican past as well as its present. (The robber bands who represented the extreme of the revolutionary effort, Fuentes seems to say, have now been replaced by the robber barons of modern finance and politics.) On the wall of his office a map shows the extent of his holdings: a newspaper, mines, timber, hotels, foreign stocks and bonds, and, not shown, money on deposit in English, Swiss, and United States banks.

Artemio Cruz is on his deathbed when the novel opens. Stricken by a gastric attack after his return from a business trip to Hermosillo on April 9, 1959, he lies in his mansion in a fashionable section of Mexico City, the moral corruption of his life as much a stench in his nostrils as the processes of decay already at work in his

body. An officious priest tries to administer the last sacrament in spite of his protests; Cruz had abandoned the Church years before. Doctors subject him to the indignity of their instruments as they examine his body. In the background are his estranged wife and the daughter who despises him. Although they pretend concern for the dying man, their greatest anxiety is the whereabouts of his will, and he refuses to tell them. His only hold on reality is a tape recording, an account of business deals and proposed transactions, played by his secretary, Padilla. While these people jostle about his bed, Artemio Cruz drifts between past and present, not in any coherent order but in a series of flashbacks tracing the course that has brought him to his present state.

Thus we see him in 1919, an ambitious young veteran of the revolution arriving at the home of the Bernal family in Perales, ostensibly to bring to a bereaved father and sister an account of Gonzalo Bernal's death before a Villista firing squad, in reality to insinuate himself into the confidence of the old *hacendado*, marry his daughter, and get possession of the Bernal estates. But his wife Catalina never fully realizes that Artemio had really fallen in love with her; influenced by Father Páez, the family priest, she believes that her marriage bought her father's security and her own at the cost of her soul, and she hates herself for the passion to which Artemio moves her at night. In the end the two despise each other, and she blames him when their son, whom he has removed from her control, is killed while fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Before Catalina there was Regina, the camp follower he also loved, taken hostage by Villa's troops and hanged. After her death there were other women: Lilia, the young mistress he took on a holiday in Acapulco and who betrayed him there, and Laura, who later married someone else. But Artemio's adventures are not all with women. We see him ruining his neighbors at Perales and getting possession of their lands, using

bribery and blackmail to buy his first election as a deputy, giving his lavish parties where the guests who mocked him behind his back were not supposed to bore him with their conversation, negotiating big deals, ruining competitors, and all the while preparing himself for the loneliness and desolation he feels when his time comes to die. Close to the end of the novel Fuentes presents two episodes that throw light on the later years of Artemio's career. One is the story of his capture by a Villista troop. Sentenced to death, he decides to give information to the enemy. Although he later kills the officer to whom he had promised betrayal, he had at least been guilty by intent. Some justification for his deed is given in the words of Gonzalo Bernal, the disillusioned idealist who nevertheless goes bravely to his death. Bernal declares that once a revolution has been corrupted by those who act only to live well, to rise in the world, the battles may still be fought and won, but the revolution without compromise has been lost to the ambitious and the mediocre. The last episode tells how it all began. Artemio Cruz was born on the *petate*, the mat symbolic of the peon's condition, the son of a decayed landowner and a half-caste girl. His only friend during his early years is Lunero, a mulatto who serves the needs of Artemio's half-crazed old grandmother and his lazy, drunken uncle. After the boy accidentally shoots his uncle he runs away to Veracruz. There, as we learn indirectly, a schoolmaster tutors Artemio and prepares him for the part he is to play in the revolution before he loses his ideals and makes the choice of betrayal and rejection that leads him to the corrupting use of power in other men's lives and his own.

Fuentes' meaning in this final episode seems clear. The revolution, in the end, was betrayed by the common people who had made it.

The character of Artemio Cruz is handled with a considerable degree of subtlety and skill. Fuentes does not gloss

over his cynicism, opportunism, or brutal ruthlessness. But he is saved from becoming a monster of pure abstraction and calculation by his relationships with the three people who mean most in his life: Lunero, the devoted mulatto for whose sake he committed a murder; Regina, the girl killed by Villistas, and his son Lorenzo. Through the novel, like a refrain, runs a reference to the time just before Lorenzo went off to fight in the Spanish war when father and son took a morning ride toward the sea. By the end of the novel Artemio's story fulfills all that it promised to a young boy, one man's journey with no real beginning or end in time, promises of love, solitude, violence, power, friendship, disillusionment, corruption, forgetfulness, innocence, and delight. There is also the realization of how at the end a man's death is joined to his beginning.

To get his story told, Fuentes employs three voices. The first is the obvious third person, used to present in dramatic form the events of Artemio's life as they are pieced together in past time. The second is the "I" of the present as the old man

lies dying, shrinks from the decay of his body, and takes fitful account of what is going on around him. The third is a vatic presence never identified—conscience? consciousness?—addressing Artemio as "you." This, we judge, is the unrealized Artemio, the man he might have been. He is a lover of the land that the real Artemio Cruz robbed and raped, the product of history, perhaps the re-created moral conscience of the revolution. He speaks in metaphors, poetry, and prophecy about history and time, places and people, because they belong to the beautiful but sad and tragic land of his birth.

The Death of Artemio Cruz is a divided book, terse yet chaotic, passionate, ironic. Too much has been made, undoubtedly, of Carlos Fuentes as one of Mexico's angry young men. In spite of his Marxist beliefs, he is essentially a romantic. He is also the possessor of an exuberant, powerful, very contemporary talent which has not yet found itself but which, aside from his surface effects of undisciplined but compelling style, comes through in clear, unhackneyed fashion, even in translation.

THE DEATH SHIP

Type of work: Novel

Author: B. Traven (1900-?)

Time: The 1920's

Locale: Belgium, Holland, France, Spain, the Mediterranean Sea

First published: 1926

Principal characters:

GERARD "PIPPIP" GALES, a young American sailor

STANISLAV, a Polish sailor, Gerard's friend

Based on the author's own experiences, written when he was about twenty-four, *The Death Ship* is unique, apparently free of direct influences, just as B. Traven is in some ways unlike any other writer. The book may be classified as a proletarian novel, written in the style of tough-guy fiction. But its thesis is not as doctrinaire, as deliberately worked out as that of a proletarian novel, nor is its style as conscious as that of a tough-guy novel.

For Gerard Gales, the young American

narrator, stranded in Antwerp when his ship returns to New Orleans without him, the passport has displaced the sun as the center of the universe. Unable to prove his citizenship, he is a man without a country, and his physical presence is no official proof of his birth. Like Kafka's K. in *The Trial*, he moves through a labyrinth of bureaucracy; officials empowered to dispense passports, certificates, sailors-books, receipts, affidavits, seals, and licenses conduct the inquisition of the

modern age. The war for liberty and democracy has produced a Europe in which to be hungry is human, to lack a passport is inhuman—unless you are rich.

A victim of nationalism, moving among fading echoes of speeches on international brotherhood, Gerard is an individualist. Immigration officials conspire to smuggle him from Belgium into Holland, then back into Belgium, then into France, where he is jailed for riding a train without a ticket and later sentenced to be shot as a suspected spy. Ironically, when he senses the universal animosity toward Americans and pretends to be a German, he is treated royally. In Spain he is left entirely alone. A people politically oppressed, the Spanish seem freer than other men and Gerard loves them. But the peasants are so good to him that he feels useless and hates himself; he senses the error in a Communist state where the individual is denied the privilege of taking his own risks. Because he is a sailor without a ship, and because he wants to return to his girl, Gerard signs aboard *The Yorikke*.

If he once thought that the world consisted of deckhands and men who made paint, he descends now into a sailor's hell as drag man in a stokehold. Its name obscured on the bow, *The Yorikke*, too, appears to lack a proper birth certificate; but though she seems ashamed of her name, Gerard exhibits a kind of nationalism himself when he withholds his true name and country and signs on as an Egyptian; no American would sail on such a ship, and he realizes that, despite its many faults, he loves his country and is wretchedly homesick. *The Yorikke* resembles no ship he has ever seen; she appears to be insane. A model death ship, she has no life jackets. A death ship is so called because her owners have decided to scuttle her for the insurance. The crew, desperate men called "deads," at the end of their tether when they come aboard, do not know when the ship will go down. The sea, Gerard imagines, will probably eructate the diseased ship for

fear of infection. No supplies—spoons, coffee cups, blankets—are provided; the men repeatedly steal a single bar of soap from one another until it has been through every filthy hand; conditions are worse than in a concentration camp. The only thing in ample supply is work, and if a man tries to collect overtime on a ship pathologically committed to profits he may find himself in a black hold with rats that would terrify a cat. Traven conveys a vivid sense of what "she" means as pronoun for a ship; Gerard constantly describes *The Yorikke* in very intimate and telling female terms.

Gerard admires his mysterious captain whose intelligence sets him apart from the old style pirate. He takes care of his men, and they would rather sink with the ship than inform the authorities that she is carrying contraband for the Riffs. *The Yorikke* crew is the filthiest Gerard has ever seen; the men wear bizarre rigs and rags. Some appear to have been shanghaied off the gallows. In the towns, other sailors shun them; men, women, and children fear them; and the police, afraid they may leave the town in ashes, follow them.

The filthiest member of the black gang is the drag man, who must perform extra and loathsome chores. Work is at the center of this novel—the struggle to get it, and, under extreme conditions, the horror and ultimate beauty of it. Delight in conveying an inside view is a characteristic of tough-guy literature. Gerard gives all the details of various work routines. One of the most horrific passages in literature is Traven's description of putting back fallen grate bars while the boiler is white hot. After his first bout at what becomes a daily task, Gerard declares that he is free, unbound, above the gods; he can do what he wishes and curse the gods, because no hell could be greater torture.

Gerard resurrects the freshness of the cliché that men become like machines. He feels like a gladiator for Caesar's fight-to-the-death spectacles. Bravery on the

battlefield is nothing when compared to the bravery of men who do certain work to keep civilization afloat. No flag drapes the bodies of casualties; they go like garbage over the fantail. On a death ship no laws keep a man in line; each worker is crucially necessary and work is a common bond. With no sense of heroics, Gerard helps save two men and is himself saved. His true countrymen, he discovers, are those workers who are scalded and scorched at the same furnace with him; he does not desert because his friend Stanislav would then have to work alone. Though Traven appears to show how men grow accustomed to misery and filth, he insists that nobody really gets used to them; one simply loses the capacity to feel and becomes hard-boiled. Few fictive descriptions of the life, the hopes, the illusions and attitudes of the doomed sailor, his qualities of ingenuity, improvisation, and audacity are as complete as Traven's.

Ironically, just as Gerard, despite his misery, learns to live and laugh on the ship, he senses *The Yorikke's* imminent doom. A further irony comes when Gerard and Stanislav are shanghaied from *The Yorikke* to serve on the new but disastrously slow *Empress of Madagascar*, which is to be scuttled in a few days. But the *Empress* kills her plotting captain and stands like a tower between the rocks before she sinks. Stanislav eats like a ship-owner before he drowns. He and Gerard are safely tied to a piece of wreckage, but Stanislav has a hallucination in which he sees *The Yorikke* leaving the dock. Wanting to go with her, he detaches himself and slips into the sea. Not yet rescued, Gerard pays his respects to his comrade in the last lines of the novel.

The style of the story—rough, garrulous, full of completely justified profanity—sounds translated, but it is consistent with Gerard's semi-literate immigrant background. Though these qualities become wearisome in three hundred pages, the sheer energy of the telling achieves a special eloquence. Traven is overly fasci-

nated by the way words come about; Gerard indulges in figurative rhetoric; many of his wisecracks seem lame, probably because his slang is dated. Humor, wit, and comedy are interwoven quite naturally among the darks of Traven's narrative. The style provides an amplification of theme through the play of language. Although Traven does not set up satirical situations, his diction and metaphorical pretenses create a satirical distortion in the telling of such episodes as those involving bureaucracy.

No plot, no story line as such holds the novel together; narratively, it seems split in half, but the handling of theme, the picaresque looseness, and the personality of the narrator create an appropriate effect to the material. The static quality is relieved by sudden transitions and by the frequent interjection of tales and anecdotes, as in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Gerard is a storyteller who never tires of retelling a tale. The consulate scenes are repetitious; we get variations on the same routine, though speeded up and foreshortened sometimes; and toward the end, Stanislav tells Gerard a story about himself that closely resembles Gerard's earlier experiences. Gerard is especially fond of ridiculing popular fiction and movie versions of the seafaring life; the difference between living and listening to an experience is discussed in the beginning and at the end. Gerard tells his general story the way a sailor would, commenting with joking metaphors and reflecting constantly on the meaning of events. The reader is visualized as a captive audience for a man who has at last found a way to speak without interruption on various social, political, and economic conditions. The novel has some poignant moments, too, but, as is typical of the tough-guy novel, sentimentality occasionally intrudes.

Gerard and Stanislav are not to be associated with the victims of recent literature. They are more victims of the nature of things than of conditions that can be reformed. Gerard may gripe with every

breath he takes, but he does not whine. He proudly insists that he can do work any man can do, anywhere. He contemptuously refuses to bow to circumstance. He refuses to blame the shipowners; having failed to take his fate in his own hands by jumping ship, he has no right to refuse to be a slave. But he can hope that he will be resurrected from the "deads" by his own will and fortitude. He knows that for the courageous man who survives the ordeal of *The Yorikke* anything is possible. By going to the bottom of agony in his daily task of replacing grate bars, Gerard comes out with a kind of peace, aware of his place in a universe that now has meaning in the slightest thing. This earned romanticism enables him to see beauty in the conventionally ugly.

Although Gerard covers, directly to the reader and in dialogue, almost every grievance of the laborer of the first twenty-five years of this century, he is not interested in easy working conditions and fringe benefits. Repeatedly, he preaches the gospel of hard work, not because work is good for the soul, which seems less involved than muscle, but be-

cause it is good for man the animal. Unlike proletarian writers, Traven achieves a kind of mystique about work. One thinks of Albert Camus' Sisyphus: for his disobedience of the officials, Sisyphus was condemned to the futile task of rolling a huge rock to the top of a mountain, after which it rolled back down to the plain. Camus likened this labor to that of the proletariat. Unintentionally, perhaps, Traven has translated Sisyphus' mythic task into existential reality. The intentions of the novel are uncertain; but at moments it appears to be an allegory about the laboring class. Working unseen at sea, deep in the black hole of an ash pit, these men, who were never born, in a sense, who are without a country, go to their deaths on a ship that does not exist officially. Gerard constantly speaks of the ship metaphorically as being over five thousand years old. The flag is so dirty it could represent any country, and thus represents all. Many nationalities are represented among the crew; each nameless person is called, ironically, by the name of the country he claims, but which has denied his existence.

DEATH'S DUELL

Type of work: Sermon

Author: John Donne (1572-1631)

First published: 1632

About a year prior to his death John Donne preached his last sermon before the king at Whitehall on February 12, 1630. His publisher, Richard Redmer, who printed the first edition in 1632 of "Death's Duell, or, A Consolation to the Soule, Against the Dying Life, and Living Death of the Body," said that it was called "The Doctors Owne Funerall Sermon." The text is from Psalm 68, the twentieth verse: *And unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.*

The language of the sermon is as imaginative, musical, and perverse as that of Donne's poetry in which he suggests, "Go

and catch a falling star," or observes with interest that in the body of a flea his blood mingles with that of his beloved. Like the poetry, the sermon stretches the mind that would follow its eloquent, shocking, and neatly ordered expression. The Trinity probably inspires the division into three parts. Donne begins with the image of a building with a firm foundation, buttresses, and an unarchitectural "knitting" of the materials. These three particulars he compares to the actions of the Persons of the Trinity. God the Father lays the foundation for man's life: he leads us from death into life. The

Holy Ghost, like the buttresses which hold up the building, supports us at the hour of death when we shall enter eternal life. The God of Mercy, the Son, like the knitting together of the building, took upon himself flesh, knitting the divine and the human natures into one and delivering us by his death. The images are startling: the winding sheet which we bring with us into the world, the dust with which our mouths are filled after death, the worm that incestuously unites son, mother, and sister in its body. The figure of Christ on the cross "rebaptized in his owne teares and sweat, and embalmed in his own blood alive" is almost as uncomfortably vivid as the last sentence of the sermon. In the concluding portion of "Death's Duell," Donne, with revival preacher fervor, calls his hearers to repentance, prayer, and dependence upon Christ.

The significance of the title seems to lie in the double aspect in the subtitle, the dying life and the living death. For Donne, the phrase "the issues of death" has three interpretations: deliverance from death by God; the manner and disposition of death by the Holy Ghost; and the deliverance from this life by death which Jesus Christ experienced because he had taken on human flesh and could have no other exit. The sermon is built around these three points.

In the first section, Donne says that throughout life we pass from one death to another. These transitions are deliverances from death. In the womb, we are in a kind of death from which we are delivered into life, the manifold deaths of the world. We come in a winding sheet to seek a grave. Birth dies in infancy, infancy in youth, youth and the rest in age. Age also dies and "determines all." We progress in evil. Youth is worse than infancy; age laments that it cannot pursue the sins of youth. So many calamities accompany each age that death itself would be "an ease" in comparison. After death, the body progresses to corruption, putrefaction, and dispersion. Christ, however,

did not suffer the corruption of the grave; and those who are alive at His second coming shall not see it. All else shall suffer dispersion; but at the resurrection God will recompact bodies and souls.

In the second section of the sermon, Donne says that "it belongs to God, and not to man to passe a judgement upon us at our death." Man is incapable of judging the state of the soul at its passing. When men think that a man dies peacefully like a lamb, God only knows if he is really stupified and unaware of dying or actually dying without reluctance. Even Christ suffered agony at the prospect of death; so reluctance to accept death is not to be condemned. The mercies of God are instantaneous and imperceptible to bystanders. Men should not judge in the violent deaths of criminals, for Christ died a shameful death and many honestly felt that he was a malefactor. God governs not by examples but by rules. Therefore, no man can judge another by his attitude at death. God judges his whole life; so if a man dies without faith apparently, none should make evil conclusions about him. God does not promise a quiet death, but "live well here and thou shalt live well for ever."

The third section of the sermon deals with Christ's incarnation and resultant death. In this "issue of death" men are delivered by the death of another, by the death of Christ. "That God, this Lord, the Lord of life could die, is a strange contemplation." That God would die is "an exaltation" of this. That God "shold die, must die," and had no issue but by death is a "superexaltation" of this aspect of God and death. Since God is the God of revenges, he would not pass over the sin of man unpunished. Christ, therefore, was bound to suffer. God would not spare himself. "There was nothing more free, more voluntary, more spontaneous than the death of Christ." The decree that Christ was to suffer was eternal; so is Infinite love, eternal love. His Father calls this death only a bruising of his heel. Christ calls it a baptism. He accepts the

cup without detestation. The cup is now salvation, a health to all the world. "As God breathed a soule into the first Adam, so this second Adam breathed his soule into God, in the hands of God. There wee leave you in that blessed dependancy, to hang upon him that hangs on the Crosse, there bath[e] in his teares, there suck at his woundes, and lie downe in peace in his grave, till hee vouchsafe

you a resurrection, and an ascension into that Kingdome, which hee hath purchas'd for you with the inestimable price of his incorruptible blood."

Commonly in Donne's time sermons were first delivered and then written from notes and memory. The words as Donne records them may not be exactly the ones which he spoke.

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE AND OTHER POEMS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: William Morris (1834-1896)

First published: 1858

The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems, the first collection of poems published by William Morris, is one of the three or four principal expressions of Pre-Raphaelitism in poetry. Although Morris had just turned twenty-four when the volume appeared, it epitomizes his qualities and foreshadows his artistic attainment. Swinburne, his contemporary, wrote concerning it: "Such things as are in this book are taught and learned in no school but that of instinct." It was Swinburne's opinion that no other literary work had ever shown more distinctly the mark of native character and that the poetry was entirely original. He saw Morris as "not yet a master," but "assuredly no longer a pupil." Not unmindful of certain technical faults and an occasional hint of confusion, Swinburne nevertheless went on to say that Morris' volume was incomparable in its time for "perception and experience of tragic truth" and that no other contemporary poet had a "touch of passion at once so broad and so sure."

Swinburne may have overstated the case for the originality of the poems; Morris shows strong influences of Malory and Froissart, though more in regard to selection of subject matter than in its interpretation. His Arthurian poems reveal a genuine passion and exceptional beauty, especially in passages such as the

vibrant, breath-taking narrative description which opens the title poem. Yet, despite their freshness and strong feeling, these poems are in what may be designated the tapestry tradition, whereas those poems derived more clearly from Froissart than from Malory—among them "Sir Peter Harpdon's End," "Concerning Geoffrey Teste Noir," and the grim "Haystack in the Floods"—attest to Morris' realization that, even in the Middle Ages, the tourney was not the only aspect of war.

Although Morris had a lifelong passion for beauty, a passion kept by his vigorous nature from any Victorian effeminacy, he had a need for certain harsh or stark elements which are already present in these poems but which he did not fully employ until, after discovering the Icelandic sagas, he wrote some of his greatest poetry in *Sigurd the Volsung*. The touches of this later power evident in this first volume of his poems are the stark descriptions such as these lines from "Concerning Geoffrey Teste Noire":

I think 'twas Geoffrey smote him on
the brow
With some spiked axe; and while he
totter'd, dim

About the eyes, the spear of Alleyne
Roux

Slipped through his camaille and his
throat; well, well!

And when Sir Peter Harpdon's wife
Alice, upon hearing of her husband's
death, cries:

I am much too young to live,
Fair God, so let me die,

we recognize in the cry a kind of Shakespearean poignancy. Among the many other qualities of this first book of poems is the apparent simplicity of a lyric like "Golden Wings," which attains deep sincerity as it smoothly reflects early memories in a manner distinctly Morris' own. There is also the plain perfection of the little poem, "Summer Dawn," in which, departing momentarily from the dreams and histories of long-past lives and battles, Morris speaks simply in his own voice of his desire for communion in nature.

Morris, while studying medieval romances and admiring them for their curious intrinsic beauty, became convinced that if we could move backward through time to the age of the sea kings, we should find the essential characteristics of the race to be exactly like those of today. Admittedly, he found the Middle Ages much more ignorant, cruel, and savage than the ages preceding or following; nevertheless, he concluded that people of those times must have thought about particular things and issues just as modern men and women do. Why then, he asked, should we not study all possible facets of this terrible society?

Morris gives us some brief, sudden, and flashing pictures of that far-off time. The title poem presents a queen about to be burned at the stake; then, at the sound of a horse's hoofs, she knows that her lover is coming to her rescue. One of the most powerful of these pictures is presented in "The Haystack in the Floods." Not revealing either how the tragedy began or how it ended, the poem opens with the haunting questions:

Had she come all the way for this
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

We are at first told just enough about the woman Jehane to make us wonder about her character and to know that as she rides along she is miserable. Her lover Robert, who rides some distance ahead of her with a few armed men, is confronted by his adversary Godmar and numerous armed men. At first she fears for her own safety rather than Robert's:

My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.

In her despair she contemplates accepting Godmar, the man whom she hates. Robert, whose men refuse to fight against the heavy odds, charges the enemy and is captured, disarmed, and bound. When after long hesitation Jehane refuses to come willingly to his castle, Godmar and his men brutally murder Robert before her eyes. The poem ends with an uncertainty about her fate. Does she go mad? Will she be taken back and burned at the castle from which she has escaped? The reader may even suspect that she is feigning madness and that before the castle is reached she will selfishly yield to Godmar, who may then retain her until he tires of her. Having given us this glimpse of medieval passion, selfishness, suffering, and cruelty, Morris ends the poem, after Godmar's men had beaten Robert's brains out, on this note:

Then Godmar turned again and said:
So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,

As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

Another grimly moving poem, the Browningsque monologue called "The Judgement of God," supplies a second example of the same device.

Other noteworthy poems in the book are "The Little Tower," "The Wind," "The Eve of Crecy," "In Prison," and "The Blue Closet." All extremely original, they display a wide range in idea and theme. In their ability to make us understand the feelings of pain, terror, or heroic effort at particular moments in the lives of people, they all have a high psychological quality. For example, Guenevere's natural and horrible soliloquy, revealing that she has wondered how the fire would quiver yards above her head, in its startlingly true psychology improves upon the narrative of the original story. Especially in his use of monologue and dialogue, Morris successfully demonstrates

that the poet can best revive the past not by detailed description of things but by faithful expression of the feelings of persons who lived long ago.

Without exaggeration, William Morris's *Defence of Guenevere* may be called an outstanding first volume of poetry. However, not unlike the early volumes of most poets, it did not make any particular impact upon the reading public when it appeared in 1858. This lack of widespread acclaim for the volume may have been a factor in Morris' withdrawing for some time from the writing of poetry. Another factor, of course, was his feeling that writing poetry was neither particularly notable nor difficult and that it had no precedence over the new and exciting experiments in tapestry-weaving and dyeing in which he was already engaged. Morris was content with the appreciation accorded the volume by a few of his friends, among them Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti—to the latter of whom it was dedicated.

DEFENCE OF POESIE

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

First published: 1595

Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* is an attempt to raise poetry above the criticism that had been directed at it by contemporary critics and to establish it as the highest of the arts, best fitted both to please men and to instruct them, the two aims stated by Horace in his *Ars Poetica*. The first part of *Defence of Poesie* is primarily theoretical; Sidney weighs the respective merits of philosophy, history, and poetry as teachers of virtue. In the final section, he surveys the state of English literature soon after 1580.

Sidney's first argument for the supremacy of poetry, and by poetry he means all imaginative writing in both verse and prose, is that it was the "first

light-giver to ignorance"; the first great works of science, philosophy, history, and even law were poems. Both the Italian and the English languages were polished and perfected by their poets, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch on the one hand, Chaucer and Gower on the other. Even Plato illuminated his philosophy with myths and dramatic scenes.

Both the Hebrews and the Romans gave high distinction to poets, considering them prophets, messengers of God or the gods. The Greeks called their writers "makers," creators, who alone could rise above this world to make a "golden" one. Sidney writes of the poet: "So as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed

within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit."

The aim of poetry, of all earthly knowledge, is "to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of." The moral philosopher feels himself the best teacher, for he can define and discuss virtue and vice and their causes; the historian argues that his examples from the past are far more effective instructors than the abstractions of the philosopher. Sidney finds the virtues of both combined in the poet, who can give both precept and example. He cites Homer's demonstration of wisdom personified in Ulysses; of valor, in Achilles; of anger, in Ajax. The poet is free to portray the ideal, while the historian must be faithful to his subjects, and they, being human, mingle faults with their virtues. The poet may show evil punished and good rewarded; the historian must record the vagaries of fortune, which allows the innocent to suffer and the vicious to prosper.

The poet has other advantages over the philosopher; however true his statements may be, they are hard to follow. The poet "doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it." Men will willingly listen to stories of Aeneas or Achilles, unaware of the lessons they are learning.

Having established the superiority of poetry to his own satisfaction, Sidney analyzes both the pleasing and the instructive aspects of the various literary genres, trying to determine what faults can have brought poetry into disrepute. The pastoral can arouse sympathy for the wretchedness of the poor or illustrate civil wrongs in fables about sheep and wolves; satire makes man laugh at folly, and reform. Comedy, which has been disgraced by "naughty play-makers and stage-keepers," is valuable for the ridicule it casts upon our faults, making us scorn them as we laugh. Tragedy, stirring up

feelings of wonder and pity, "teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded."

Sidney finds nothing to criticize in the work of the lyric poet, who lauds virtuous acts, gives moral precepts, and sometimes praises God, and he defends epic poetry as the greatest of all the genres: "For, as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy."

Concluding his defense, Sidney takes up the most frequently repeated criticisms of poetry, that it is merely rhyming and versifying, that there are other kinds of knowledge which are more worthy of men's time, that poetry is "the mother of lies," that it inspires evil lusts in men, and, finally, that Plato banished it from his commonwealth. Against the first objection Sidney reiterates his statement that poetry is not exclusively that which is written in verse, though he defends the use of verse on the grounds that it is a great aid to the memory and that it is "the only fit speech for music."

The second argument has already been answered; if poetry be the greatest of teachers and inspirations to virtue, it must be worthy of the greatest share of man's attention. To the contention that poets are liars, Sidney replies that since they never affirm their subjects to be literally true or "real," they cannot lie. They do not, indeed, reproduce details of life from specific incidents, but neither do they attempt to prove the false true. They rather call upon men's imagination for the "willing suspension of disbelief" and tell, not "what is or is not, but what should or should not be."

Sidney confesses that there is some justice in the condemnation of poetry for its scurrility, but he imputes the fault to bad poets who abuse their art, rather than to poetry itself. He suggests that Plato, in banishing poets from his Republic, was barring those bad writers who corrupted

youth with false pictures of the gods, not the art of poetry itself.

Satisfied with these answers, Sidney then turns to the specific problems of literature in England in his own day. He sees no reason for poetry to flourish in Italy, France, Scotland, and not in his own nation, except the laziness of the poets themselves. They will neither study to acquire ideas nor practice to perfect a style for conveying these ideas. A few English writers and works are, however, worthy of a place in world literature. Sidney praises Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the "beautiful parts" of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and the lyrics of the Earl of Surrey, and he finds that the *Shepherd's Calendar* "hath much poetry in his eclogues," though he objects to Spenser's use of "rustic language," on the grounds that neither Theocritus nor Virgil, the most famous classical writers of pastoral, employed it. For the rest of English poetry Sidney has only scorn, for it seemed to him meaningless: "One verse did but beget another, without ordering at the first what should be at the last; which becomes a confused mass of words, with a tinkling sound of rime, barely accompanied with reason."

The public criticism of drama seems to him justified, with a very few exceptions. He commends *Gorboduc*, a melodramatic Seneca-type tragedy, for its "stately speeches," "well-sounding phrases," and "notable morality," but he is disturbed by the authors' failure to observe the unities of time and place. The rest of the tragedies of the age seem absurd in their broad leaps in space and time, spanning continents and decades in two hours. A true Aristotelian in his views on drama, Sidney is convinced that stage action should

be confined to one episode; other events may be reported in the dialogue to provide necessary background for the central events. He objects, too, to the presence of scurrilous comic scenes, chiefly designed to evoke loud laughter from the audience, in the tragedies.

Sidney's last target is the affected artificial diction of lyric poetry, especially of love poetry. He believes that the wildly imaginative conceits of the Euphuists are tedious, and he praises, in contrast, the sense of decorum, of fitting diction and imagery, of the great classical orators.

After a few comments on the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative verse and on types of rhyme, Sidney addresses his readers, promising fame and blessings to those who will appreciate the values of poetry and laying this curse on those who will not: "While you live you live in love, and never get favor, for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth, for want of an epitaph."

The *Defence of Poesie* presents principles generally accepted by the critics throughout the Renaissance; the author leans heavily upon the dicta of the most noted classical critics, Aristotle, Plato, and Horace, and his standards are echoed by the major English critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. Sidney's essay is one of the most polished and interesting pieces of Elizabethan prose, and his comments on the writing of his own time have been borne out by the judgment of the centuries. Although this work is the first major piece of English literary criticism, it has seldom been surpassed in the centuries since Sidney's death.

A DEFENCE OF POETRY

Type of work: Literary essay

Author: Percy Bysshe Shelley (1782-1822)

First published: 1840

In this essay Shelley is defending poetry—"my mistress, *Urania*"—against

the attack by Thomas Love Peacock in "The Four Ages Of Poetry," published in

the first and only number of the *Literary Miscellany* in 1820. The polemical exchange came to nothing for *A Defence of Poetry* remained unpublished until 1840. In his essay Peacock elaborated the familiar figure of the Golden and Silver Ages of classical poetry into four (Iron, Gold, Silver, and Brass), skipped over "the dark ages" and repeated the succession in English poetry. Peacock's point was that poetry never amounts to much in civilized society; Shelley's defense is that poetry is the essential man. Their views were antithetical and neither made contact with the other: Peacock's attack is a boisterous satire, Shelley's defense is an elevated prose poem.

Nevertheless, Peacock's article is still a necessary preface to Shelley's arguments, not because one prompted the other or because Shelley adopted Peacock's historical method in the middle section of his essay, but because as a pair they show clearly the opposing preferences of the older public for eighteenth century wit and of the younger for enthusiasm. Peacock's "Four Ages" has also the merit of amusing; Shelley is never amusing. Peacock's argument is that poetry belongs properly to primitive societies, that as they become civilized they become rational and nonpoetical; hence it was not until the late seventeenth century that England equaled in the work of Shakespeare and Milton the Golden Age of Homeric Greece. Early nineteenth century England seemed to him to have reached the Age of Brass in poetry but a kind of Golden Age in science; therefore, he argued, leave poetry to the primitive societies where it belongs. He is most amusing in his picture of the first Age of Iron, in which the bard of the tribal chief "is always ready to celebrate the strength of his arm, being first duly inspired by that of his liquor." Apart from Homer, Peacock respects no poet, not even Shakespeare who mixed his unities and thought nothing of "deposing a Roman Emperor by an Italian Count, and sending him off in the guise of a French pilgrim to be

shot with a blunderbuss by an English archer." Peacock's jest turns sour as he tires of his figure, and his strictures on contemporary poetry become a diatribe of which the gist is that "a poet of our times is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community." Shelley, to whom Peacock sent a copy of his essay, was stirred to write his only prose statement on his craft. In it he came to the memorable conclusion that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

A Defence of Poetry falls into three parts. First, Shelley presents an argument that all men are poets in some degree, for poetry is an innate faculty of Man; hence it is seen in all societies at all times and to eternity. In the second part he attempts the historical proof, which he abandons in the third to make a subjective and poetic affirmation of the perpetual presence and ennobling virtue of poetry. In presenting his beliefs, Shelley used the ideas that inspire his poems and attempted to codify them from the base Peacock had given him. But Peacock could begin at once with his first age; Shelley found it necessary to define at the outset his notion of poetry. Two major ideas run through this first section and are reflected in the rest of the essay: The Platonic idea of mimesis, in which the imagination responds to the eternal verities it glimpses behind the material form, and the eighteenth century idea of the "sympathetic imagination" which of its own initiative extends itself and assumes an empathy with external objects and beings. The first idea leads Shelley to assert the superiority of the poet as the most active in using the glimpses of truth and conveying them to lesser beings for their uplifting; for this reason the poet is the most powerful influence on mankind, a "legislator." The second idea gives the poet an insight into the ills of mankind which, once understood, can be corrected; here is the second meaning of "legislator."

The first part presented is in two sections, dealing first with the mimetic, then

with the expressive powers of poetry, which powers are part of the definition of poetry; the other two parts of the definition are contained in four paragraphs on the form of poetry, especially on its use of language, the medium which makes it superior to other art media and which is called "measured" in contradistinction to "unmeasured" language or prose. But the whole essay is prefaced by four paragraphs which define poetry in the largest or organic sense, not by its mechanics. These paragraphs go to the heart of the difference between Peacock and Shelley.

Shelley begins with a distinction between reason and imagination, leaving to the former the work of numbering, analyzing, and relating objects; the imagination perceives the similitude of objects in their innate values, not in their appearance, and synthesizes these values, presumably, into a valid and Platonic One or Truth. The synthetic principle of the imagination is poetry; Man is compared to "an Aeolian lyre," subject to impressions external and internal but possessing an inner principle (poetry) which produces not simply melody but harmony, not merely the sound of poetry but the potential of the poetic product to harmonize Man or bring him closer to the poetry of being. Poetry is thus both the name of a form of language (measured) and of the power of producing it and benefiting from the poem. Here Shelley announces that poets are "the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society" because they discover the laws of harmony and become "legislators" by giving these laws the form of a poem. The poetic product or poem may be an act of mimesis, but the act proceeds from the poetic faculty highly developed in the poet and contained in all men: "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth."

The argument in the second section of the first part, devoted to the effects of poetry on society, has been anticipated in the foregoing analysis. *A Defence of Poetry*, as an "apologia," could well end at

that point but Shelley wanted to convince Peacock that his theory has external evidence. This he offers in the second part of the essay.

The historical method had already been touched on in Shelley's example of the propensity of the savage or child to imitate the impressions it receives, like a "lyre" producing melody only. Shelley's reading of history is as willful as Peacock's in his assertion that the morality of an age corresponds to the goodness or badness of its poetry; he adduces Greek classical drama as an evidence of a healthy society and Hellenic bucolic poetry as a sign of decay when the poets ceased to be the acknowledged legislators of the Alexandrian Hellenes. In order to cope with the same progression of health and decay in the literature of Rome, which would seem to prove Peacock's scheme, Shelley shifts the whole cycle into "episodes of that cyclic poem written by time upon the memories of men." He encounters further difficulty in coping with Christianity, for by Shelley's theory Jesus must be a great poet: "The scattered fragments preserved to us by the biographers of this extraordinary person, are all instinct with the most vivid poetry." But something went wrong in the Dark Ages: ". . . the extinction of the poetic principle . . . from causes too intricate to be here discussed." Shelley feels safer with Dante and Milton: "But let us not be betrayed from a defence into a critical history of poetry. . . ."

After abandoning the historical method which, had he followed Peacock step by step, would have brought him up to his contemporaries, Shelley returns to his defence by attacking "the promoters of utility" and, by implication, Peacock. To the utilitarian objection that poetry simply produces pleasure and that pleasure is profitless, Shelley asserts that the pleasure of poetry lies not in its superficial melody but in its innate harmony, alone capable of checking "the calculating faculty" which has already produced

"more scientific and economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies." Shelley follows this with a paragraph which summarizes the duality of the "poetic faculty"; by synthesis it "creates new materials of knowledge and power and pleasure," and by its expressive powers it reproduces those materials "according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good."

Shelley's peroration, his personal and poetic justification for poetry, opens with three paragraphs beginning: "Poetry is

indeed something divine." "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." "Poetry turns all things to loveliness. . . ." This is the moving genius of *Adonais*. Searching for the best proof to defend poetry from the rationalizations of Peacock, Shelley followed the prompting of his own "poetic principle" in concluding *A Defence of Poetry* with a sustained lyric in prose that Peacock could never match. The power of this essay is still inspiring. It constitutes Shelley's best claim outside his verse to be a "legislator" to the world.

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Type of work: Essays in political science

Author: Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)

First published: Volume I, 1835; Volume II, 1840

Alexis de Tocqueville lived in a time of enormous political change, when every conceivable variety of political theory flourished. He was born shortly after the French Revolution had turned itself into the Empire, and in his lifetime occurred those further changes which transformed France, at least nominally, into a Republic. His object in writing *Democracy in America* was twofold: to write about the new nation that he so much admired and to establish a new way of examining ideas of politics. Instead of proceeding from ideas of right and responsibility, de Tocqueville preferred to begin by analyzing social institutions as they functioned in reality. Instead of working, as Rousseau had worked, from an arbitrary picture of the beginnings of humanity in a "natural" condition, de Tocqueville preferred to work from what was statistically observable. Thus, *Democracy in America* begins with a picture of the geography of the new continent, its weather, its indigenous tribes, its economy, and its natural resources. In this respect *Democracy in America* is the forerunner of the scientific spirit in the investigation of social structures.

Much of *Democracy in America* is concerned with institutions, and the first of these described by its author is that of the partition of property. He points out that it is customary in the nations of Europe to divide property by the laws of primogeniture. The result is that property remains fixed in extent and in possession; the family, no matter how changed in each generation, is linked to the wealth and political power of landed property. The family represents the estate, the estate the family, and naturally a strong inequality is carried from one generation to another. The foundations of American culture are to be found, de Tocqueville points out, in the equal partition of land and fortune. Land is continually broken up into parcels, sold, developed, and transformed. The accompanying wealth and power is much more fluid than in societies in which descent really dominates fortune. The subsidiary effect of equal partition is the access of careers to men who might in another system be blocked from advancement.

De Tocqueville was fascinated by the practice of equality, a phenomenon rarely encountered in France during his life-

time. His next series of chapters concerns political equality; he is one of the first great commentators on the democracy of the township and corporation in early nineteenth century America. He emphasizes that it is fundamental to understand the nature of the township, particularly in its New England tradition. The key to the nature of the American nation, he finds, is the wide and responsible nature of freedom at the level of municipal government. This gives the citizen direct voice in his government and trains him for the representative democracy of the Federal government. De Tocqueville points out that under this form of government power is actually concentrated in the hands of the voter; the legislative and executive branches have no power of their own, but merely represent those who appoint them. To us this fact is commonplace, but it was a new idea for the citizens of Europe.

Although much of this work is in praise of American democracy, de Tocqueville makes some important qualifications. His first principle is that abuse in government occurs when one special interest is served to the exclusion of all others. This kind of abuse, he remarks, formerly occurred when the upper classes imposed their will on the lower, when the military, or feudal, or financial, or even religious values operate to the exclusion of all others. His great qualification of democracy is that in this form of government a kind of tyranny is also possible, that of the majority. He states that it is conceivable that the free institutions of America may be destroyed by forcing all minorities to give up their freedoms for what is supposedly the good of the majority. In that case, he concludes, democracy will give way first to despotism and then to anarchy. Above all things de Tocqueville is taken with equality, and that principle, regardless of the greatest good for the greatest number, is what animates his opinion.

Democracy in America is of course principally about its great subject, but

there are in it many reminders of a larger view that its author has. One constant theme of the book is that the Old World must learn from the New; in fact, the book functions not so much as an independent study of a unique phenomenon as a study of comparative political science. We will not succeed in France, the author remarks, if we do not succeed in introducing democratic institutions. There will be independence for none, he adds, unless, like the American republic, we grant independence for all. With uncommon clarity he predicts the totalitarian potentialities of the twentieth century, where unlimited power restricts itself not to a class, but first to a party, and then to a single man. The famous ending of the first volume carries this insight to a more elaborate and specific culmination. There are two nations, de Tocqueville says, which will probably dominate the next century, the United States and Russia. One, he says, is driven by the desire for power and war, the other by the desire to increase domestic prosperity. He predicts that there will be no peace until the aggressiveness of Russia is checked by the peacefulness of the United States: in his own words, he looks to a future in which the principle of "servitude" will encounter that of "freedom."

The second volume of *Democracy in America* was published after a lapse of five years. The first volume had established its author as one of the best political thinkers in Europe. It won for him not only the esteem of the best minds of the Continent, but rewards financial and even political, so that from the time of its publication de Tocqueville was to take an active part as a member of the French government. The second volume is concerned not with the basic economic and social characteristics of America, but with subsidiary questions about the nature of American culture. He asks, for example, how Americans cultivate the arts and whether or not eloquence is to be encountered in the rhetoric of Congress. He covers the progress of science as well

as that of poetry, the position of religious minorities, even the meaning of public monuments in a democracy. His general conclusion on the arts in America is that they do not flourish as they do in other political climates, for the arts require an atmosphere of privilege and an amount of money that a tax-conscious public is quite unlikely to spend. The "useful," he says, is much preferred in a democracy to the "beautiful." The artist becomes an artisan and, the author remarks with some delicacy, he tends to produce "imperfect commodities" rather than lasting works of art.

If these qualifications are admitted they are also weighted; de Tocqueville believes that a lowering of some standards is amply compensated by a heightening of others. Particularly in the matter of foreign policy does he admire the republican sense as well as form of government. Toward the end of *Democracy in America* he spends much thought on the inclinations toward war and peace of different forms of government. The democratic form, he judges, is predisposed to peace because of various influences: the rapid growth of personal wealth; the stake in property; the less material but equally

important "gentleness of heart" which allows the citizens of a democracy a more humane view of life. Yet, when the democratic government is involved in war, the same application of ambition and energy that is so marked in commercial life results often in military success as well. De Tocqueville's last thoughts about the democracy and its army deal with the danger to any society from its own standing army, and he covers substantially the same ground on this matter as do the authors of the *Federalist* papers.

Democracy in America ends with the restatement that despotism may be encountered even in republics. While democracies can, the author admits, on occasion be violent and unjust, he believes that these occasions are exceptional. They will be more and more frequent, however, in proportion, as equality is allowed to lapse. Among the last of de Tocqueville's animated descriptions is that of the "flock of timid and industrious animals" who have given up their individuality to a strong central government. He urges a balance between central and decentralized power, the constant consciousness of equality for all members of the polity.

DEMOCRATIC VISTAS

Type of work: Social and literary criticism

Author: Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

First published: 1871

Written when Whitman was in his early fifties, *Democratic Vistas* demonstrates the author's discouragement at what he saw in America. The sobering effects of the Civil War, the death of Lincoln, and the overwhelming change resulting from the industrial revolution are quite evident as Whitman attempts to introduce a plan for the development of a golden age in the New World.

Like Whitman's poetry, the work has no substantial organization. It is usually repetitious and rambling. Nevertheless, in its portrait of Whitman's philosophy,

and in its analysis of the potentiality of the American society, *Democratic Vistas* is extremely significant. Its criticism of American politics, culture, and values in general was partly the result of the disillusionment that existed after the Civil War, but the considerations are still quite applicable to American society.

Simply stated, the thesis of *Democratic Vistas* is that while America is surpassing all other nations industrially and has the material facilities to continue its advancement, it lacks a distinct culture or spiritual identity. According to Whitman,

such an identity could only come about through works of literature written in new literary styles by new artists. In effect, he is stating that America has the human resources, the material resources, and the sound political structure to make itself the most ideal society which has ever existed. As Whitman views the American scene, however, he sees no unique values, no real expression of these new concepts, but only a materialistic society relying on old ideas and traditional expression. Thus, the overall result of the work is a plea for great literary works which would serve as a foundation for a new society.

Though the work has no organization other than the repetition of this same theme, Whitman's approach follows four general divisions: a portrait of the American society and its values; a statement of the basic principles and ideals which represent the goals of the "mass, or lump character" of America; the principle of the individual as the focal point for the ideal society; and great literature as the force which will bring about this society.

Whitman begins by stating his central theme—that America will never be great unless it is able to separate itself from the Old World tradition:

I say that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences.

Whitman further states that America is a new experiment founded on new principles and cannot rely on old ideas. While some might argue that the "republic is, in performance, really enacting today the grandest arts, poems, etc., by beating up the wilderness into fertile farms, and in her railroads, ships, machinery, etc.," Whitman responds that "society, in these States, is canker'd, crude, superstitious and rotten":

The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, maladministration; and the judiciary is tainted.

After dwelling on the "lamentable conditions" which exist in America, Whitman states that the answer to such a problem is a "new-founded literature" which would be "consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching and training men."

Having thus established the tone of his essay, Whitman proceeds to the first main consideration, an analysis of the present American society. His portrait of the "lump character" shows that the artist has, in the past, had to struggle against the masses. He also shows that the reverse has been true, for literature "has never recognized the People." It is Whitman's belief that America is experiencing the birth of a new sort of mass personality which is courageous, all-inclusive, and potentially great. To deny cultural identity to this mass would be to destroy this potentiality.

We believe the ulterior object of political and all other government, (having, of course, provided for the police, the safety of life, property, and for the basic statute and common law, and their administration, always first in order), to be among the rest, not merely to rule, to repress disorder, etc., but to develop, to open up to cultivation, to encourage the possibilities of all beneficent and manly outcroppage, and of that aspiration for independence, and the pride and self-respect latent in all characters.

In other words, Whitman believed that physical freedom is only part of America's goal. The society as a whole can progress only when it possesses a cultural freedom and a set of ideals which will enable the people to attain a transcendent spirituality. Still, the law and the political form are important to Whitman, for it is only in this governmental

structure that men of all races and backgrounds can be brought together. Whitman even sees in the future a greater prosperity of the masses and a tremendous physical growth: "The true gravitational hold of liberalism in the United States will be a more universal ownership of property, general homesteads, general comfort—a vast, intertwining reticulation of wealth."

According to Whitman, this wealth, plus a genuine solidarity of mass spirit and integrity, will make this system survive. Two examples which he gives to prove this point are that "the land which could raise such as the late rebellion, could also put it down," and that the fervor of the Americans is also evident in the interest which they show in the election of their leaders: "I know nothing grander, better exercise, better digestion, more positive proof of the past, the triumphant result of faith in human kind, than a well-contested American national election."

Having discussed the quality of America's political system and the character of its people, Whitman then turns to the individual, for "rich, luxuriant, varied personalism," argues Whitman, is the key to civilization. All else, such as literature or government, is important only insofar as it assists in the "production of perfect characters among the people." It was Whitman's belief that this principle is the basis for America's future.

Whitman defines individuality as creativity, that independent thought by which each person is able to transcend the mass, and he states that it is precisely this quality that Americans lack. He attributes this failure to an attachment to "Culture," or traditional learning. The scholar, for example, is taught what to believe, and consequently believes in nothing. Rather than serving to motivate creativity, this type of culture only systematizes and stagnates individuality.

It is not that Whitman objected to culture. But he believed that instead of being limited to the "parlors or lecture

rooms," it should be distributed among all people of all classes. In short, the masses should be given the opportunity to achieve identity. We have indeed developed people who are physically strong and educated, says Whitman, but the "gloomiest consequences" will result if people are left with an "unsophisticated Conscience."

The third and final section of the essay is devoted to the power which would enable the development of this "primary moral element," a great American literature:

A boundless field to fill! A new creation,
with needed orbic works launch'd forth,
to revolve in free and lawful circuits—
to move, self-poised, through the ether,
and shine like heaven's own suns! With
such, and nothing less, we suggest that
New World Literature, fit to rise upon,
cohere, and finalize in time, these
States.

By "New World Literature" Whitman does not mean quantity; we have, he states, more publications than any other country. Rather, he is referring to literary forms which would represent America as the Bible, the works of Homer, Plato, and Aeschylus represent their respective civilizations. Nor should we resort to the achievements of the past, for these works were written for remote times and problems.

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye
were, in your atmospheres, grown not
for America, but rather for her foes, the
feudal and the old—while our genius
is democratic and modern.

Whitman summarizes what has thus far been accomplished by describing the stages of development in American writing. He states that America has gone through two stages in preparation for a third and final stage, without which the first two become useless: "The First stage was the planning and putting on record the political foundation rights of immense masses of people. . . . The Sec-

and stage relates to material prosperity, wealth, produce. . . ."

The third and final stage will be "a native expression-spirit," "a sublime and serious Religious Democracy sternly taking command." This spirit of impetus can come from no other land, because the foundations for this literature exist only in America.

The artist who will produce this literature will be a student of nature. "Part of the test of a great literatus," says Whitman, "shall be the absence in him of the idea of the covert, the lurid, the maleficent, the devil, . . . hell, natural depravity, and the like." More important, however, will be his faith, his simplicity of statement, and his "adherence to natural standards."

Whitman is no less explicit in his description of the themes of these great works. He says that "Nature, true Nature, and the true idea of Nature, long absent, must, above all, become fully restored, enlarged, and must furnish the pervading atmosphere to poems, and the test of all high literary and aesthetic compositions."

Here Whitman is not referring to the "posyes and nightingales of the English

poets," but to the spiritual significance, symbolic and implicit, in the unity of all created matter. By means of this expression all men will be able to understand the essential harmony in the universe and thus regain their faith which has been "scared away by science."

Exactly how the artist will go about this process is not really made clear; but Whitman does say that a whole new idea of composition must be the means. In any case, he assures us that we cannot rest on what has already been accomplished; our hope is in the future.

The final tone of Whitman's essay is one which pervades the whole work; he is desperate and is trying to convince the reader that he should also be concerned. Earlier in his career Whitman had thought that great American literature was on the verge of being created. At the writing of *Democratic Vistas* he saw that what he dreamed of had not occurred, and he attempted to motivate the potential philosopher-artists through this essay. The result is that when he has not obscured his message with too many words, he has given an excellent critique of American society which is as significant now as it was in Whitman's day.

THE DEMON: AN EASTERN TALE

Type of work: Poem

Author: Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov (1814-1841)

First published: 1841

The biographical approach to literature explains the work of a writer by relating the events of his life to a study of his art and style. The problem thus created is that often such an approach assumes a principle of determinism which obscures the less superficial and more significant aspects of the work. The biographer finds in the early life of the artist the beginnings of an inevitable development and the causes of all his preoccupations, and he becomes a sort of prophet after the event. In the case of Mikhail Lermontov, however, there exists a curi-

ous and solid relationship between biography and work that calls for close inspection.

Lermontov is considered to be the outstanding representative of Russian romanticism. From 1826 to 1834 he admittedly imitated Byron, but at the same time this imitation was more than a pose for him. In a poem of 1832 he wrote: "No I am not like Byron, like him I am a persecuted wanderer, but mine is a Russian soul. . . . I began earlier, and earlier I shall end. . . . Who will communicate my thoughts to the world? Either

myself, or God, or nobody." Lermontov was admittedly egoistic, but he himself saw his narcissism as a misfortune and as a self-destructive element in his personality. He felt that the poet is made for suffering in a world where angelic and demonic principles constantly war with each other. Lermontov's long verse-narrative, *The Demon*, illustrates his feeling of the always-present contradiction of good and evil. Unlike Byron, he often described "glimpses of perfection" or "a state of bliss," and in *The Demon* he gave full rein to his ambivalent nature, to his preoccupation with evil along with a sincere though ineffectual craving for what is good. The reasons behind this juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory ideas reveal the poem to be one of Lermontov's most personal creations.

Lermontov wrote the first draft of *The Demon* when he was only fifteen. He reworked the theme in 1830 and 1833, and again in 1838 after being exiled to the Caucasus for his eulogistic poem to Pushkin. *The Demon* was finally completed, after work on several more drafts, shortly before his death in 1841. The constant revisions show that Lermontov was intensely preoccupied with the ideas of the poem and desired to express them with precision. The poem was extensively reworked at least eight times, but the final variant still retained some of the original lines of 1829.

While Lermontov was working on the first draft, he also wrote a short lyric called "My Demon." It has been said that he wrote this poem in imitation of a verse by Pushkin with the same title. Whether this claim is true or not, Lermontov did express an attitude entirely his own. Instead of denouncing the spirit of negation as Pushkin had done, Lermontov was attracted to "the sinister collection of evils." His demon was at first a fierce being: "He scorns pure love; he rejects all prayers; he beholds blood indifferently." Two years later he is less forbidding and violent. He has become more intimately bound to life, and in a sense he is a more

direct representation of Lermontov himself. "The proud demon will not depart, as long as I live, from me." The dark side of the poet's personality taunts him with images of bliss and purity, but they are wholly unattainable.

The 1838 variant of *The Demon* replaces the previous indefinite locale with an exotic Caucasian setting. In his childhood Lermontov had twice been to the Caucasus, and doubtless the mountains and the strange customs and folklore of the region made a strong impression on him. The critic Janko Lavrin has said that Lermontov's poetic gift began to develop early and was fostered by two circumstances, one of which was his visits to the Caucasus. Lermontov was indeed impressed by the mountains, as is evidenced by his repeated descriptions of them in his verse.

The heroine of the early versions had been an anonymous nun, but in the 1838 version she is a passionate Georgian princess named Tamara. It is believed that Lermontov used as the basis for this element an Ossetian folktale about a mountain demon in love with a beautiful mortal maiden. Perhaps he was also influenced by Byron's *Cain and Heaven and Earth*, Thomas Moore's *Love of the Angels*, or Alfred de Vigny's *Eloa*. In any case, the final variant of *The Demon* is Lermontov's alone. He took a theme which other writers had used and related it to himself. In the dedication to the second draft Lermontov personalized his idea; "Like my cold and cruel Demon, I enjoyed doing evil in this world; deceit was not new to me, and my heart was full of poison. But now, like that gloomy Genius, I have been reborn through your presence for innocent delights, for hope and freedom."

Lermontov's *Demon* is, characteristically enough, a former angel who has rebelled against God. Despite his pride in his independence, he still remembers his former bliss. After he sees the beautiful Tamara, he begins to think his love for her might reconcile him to life and to

God, "In Paradise again I'd shine, like a new angel in new splendor." Tamara cannot resist his impassioned words, but as soon as they kiss, she dies and her soul is taken by God. The Demon is left alone, doomed to dwell in the same void until the end of time. Whereas Tamara redeemed her sin by death, the Demon is incapable of sacrifice. Lermontov's personal Demon is more human than a Satan or a Mephistopheles. He is ruled by appetite, passion, and cold self-absorption.

Although Lermontov expressed in this poem his own isolation and deracination, the poem remains artificial when judged by modern standards. The theme is vague and contrived; the critic D. S. Mirsky finds significance in the fact that it became the libretto for a theatrical opera by Anton Rubenstein. *The Demon* was censored during the reign of Nicholas I for being "anti-religious." It was, however, circulated privately and by the second half of the nineteenth century was one of the most popular poems in Russia. The lyrical, musical quality of the poem made it especially popular. Many poets, among them Blok, Gorky, and Pasternak, have recognized it as a source of inspiration.

Perhaps it is difficult to take the theme of *The Demon* seriously. But even if we do not, the poem remains a powerful psychological document. It speaks of man as an exile who, after rejecting human soci-

ety, still longs to be a part of it. The critic R. Poggioli has said that *The Demon* is simply a monologue which the poet utters through the undramatic protagonists. Accordingly, the instrument Lermontov uses in *The Demon* is the confession device employed simply and directly, revealing a true image of himself and his life, mirroring his guilt and shame, and becoming the source of repentance as well as hope. In other words, *The Demon* attempted to reconcile the angelic and demonic elements which were aspects of the poet's view of himself. Undeniably, *The Demon* was a very personal poem. Yet it speaks of emotion and attitude on an unrealistic level. It was not until Lermontov wrote his most outstanding work, the novel titled *A Hero of Our Time*, that he was able to transfer his personal complexity and contradiction to a romantic but realistically conceived tale. The protagonist of his great work of fiction is no longer a demon but a very earthy soldier. He is bitter and cynical toward life, and he, like Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, is an example of the superfluous man. The place Lermontov's *Demon* had as a forerunner of this idea is obvious. Despite the tendency to discount *The Demon* as a significant work today, it is essential to an understanding of Lermontov and perhaps even more to an understanding of the evolution of his art.

DESCENT INTO HELL

Type of work: Novel

Author: Charles Williams (1886-1945)

Time: June and July, in the 1930's

Locale: Battle Hill, a residential area near London

First published: 1937

Principal characters:

PAULINE ANSTRUTHER, an orphaned girl in her twenties

MARGARET ANSTRUTHER, her grandmother

PETER STANHOPE, an eminent poet

LAWRENCE WENTWORTH, a military historian

ADELA HUNT, an aspiring actress

HUGH PRESCOTT, her suitor

MRS. LILY SAMMILE, a neighbor

MRS. PARRY, a civic leader engaged in directing a play

The events of this novel are on two planes which intersect at so many points that the ordinary barriers between the natural and supernatural worlds disappear. On the realistic plane of activities in the suburb of Battle Hill, the narrative concerns the production of a verse drama written by Peter Stanhope, an eminent poet and inhabitant of the Manor House, which had belonged to his family before the housing estate was built. A group of his neighbors, under the leadership of the capable Mrs. Parry, have the privilege of performing his new play in his garden, but only one of them, Pauline Anstruther, even remotely grasps the spiritual significance of his pastoral fantasy. Pauline's sensibility is so quickened by the nuances of his verse that she confides to him the terror which has haunted her for years: the recurrent appearance of her *doppelgänger*.

Peter Stanhope explains to her the principle of substitution which was fundamental in Charles Williams's thought: one person through love can take over and bear the burden of another so that the sufferer is relieved. When Pauline is willing to accept his offer to bear her burden, she discovers that she is no longer tortured by her own problem; instead, she is given the opportunity to bear someone else's burden of fear. Her growth in grace is the principal subject of the novel.

As the rehearsals for the play proceed, Pauline's role as leader of the chorus is paralleled by her role in the supernatural drama which takes place concurrently in Battle Hill. The spiritual energy released through the play sets in motion a series of events which transcend ordinary time, affecting a number of other inhabitants of the suburb. The housing estate built in the 1920's had taken its name from the hill, which had been a scene of battle from the time of the ancient Britons to the period of the Tudors. While the estate was being built, the timeless "magnetism of death," still alive on the Hill, as the suburb was usually called, had touched a despairing unskilled laborer,

who had hanged himself on the scaffolding of an unfinished house. His unresting spirit still inhabits the area, unrecognized by the occupier of the finished house, Lawrence Wentworth, a noted military historian and adviser to the producer of the play. As a middle-aged bachelor Wentworth has developed a secret passion for pretty, conceited Adela Hunt, who is both the heroine in the play and the girl friend in ordinary life of the leading man, Hugh Prescott. Wentworth's jealousy is so consuming that he is destroying himself as surely as the suicide did. Also dying is Pauline's grandmother, Margaret Anstruther, but her death is the natural fulfillment of a well-spent life. Shortly before she dies, she is visited by an unpleasantly ingratiating and vaguely sinister neighbor, Mrs. Lily Sammile, who appears unexpectedly at several crises in the novel. Each of these characters is involved in the action of which Pauline is the protagonist.

The plot is comprehensible only in terms of the theme: the triumph of love over death. Pauline's love for her grandmother has been dutiful but detached during the years since her parents' death when she has lived in Mrs. Anstruther's house as dependent and companion. It is not until Stanhope has relieved her of her fear that Pauline can talk to her grandmother about it and appreciate the depth of the old woman's love. Mrs. Anstruther initiates Pauline further into the doctrine of substituted love by explaining that she may be called upon to bear the pain of their ancestor, John Struther, whose martyrdom by fire is well-known as family history.

As the dying woman approaches the limits of mortality, she can see the face of the suicide as he looks into her window during his ceaseless wandering, and soon she tells Pauline that the girl must go out in the middle of the night because someone needs her near Mr. Wentworth's. The nurse thinks the patient's mind is wandering, but Pauline knows that she must go. She discovers she no longer fears

the dark, and she sees the dead man in ordinary mortal form. He asks the way to London, gently refuses her offer to pay his fare, and sets off to walk to the city. As she watches him, his form is transmuted into the agonized body of her ancestor, and she is given the opportunity of bearing his burden by enduring the fire in a mystical experience of very real pain. All this happens during the night between the dress rehearsal and the performance of the play. Mrs. Anstruther dies five minutes after Pauline gets home, but the death does not keep her from acting in the play as the producer had feared: Love has given Pauline a new perspective on time and mortality.

As a counterpoint to Pauline's experience throughout the novel, Lawrence Wentworth's love operates negatively because it is focused on himself. His passion is for his idea of Adela Hunt rather than for the real person, and his jealousy of Hugh Prescott is so powerful that it creates a tangible image of the girl who, he imagines, visits him with increasing frequency and becomes his mistress. In the bedroom where the suicide hanged himself, Wentworth's reason is destroyed by his fantasies of false love. The crisis of his descent into hell is reached on the day of the dress rehearsal, when Mrs. Parry consults him as a military historian on a detail in the costumes of the guards. Wentworth knows that they are wrong and that he could arrange for them to be altered; but he is so preoccupied with his erotic experience that he cannot be bothered and tells a lie instead of the truth. This sacrifice of the historian's integrity confirms the loss of his soul. The next day his seat at the play is empty.

On the afternoon of the performance there is an unnatural stillness in the atmosphere, like the calm before a storm. Some of the cast complain of the heat, but the play proceeds successfully and the only disturbance is Mrs. Sammille's fainting at the end. After that a number of residents of the Hill feel unwell, but life proceeds normally. Margaret An-

struther is buried. Pauline makes plans to move into London and take a job.

A few days after the funeral Adela and Hugh are walking and carrying on a mild argument which reveals the difference between them: Hugh's love for Adela is consistent with his habit of seeing life clearly, while Adela's love for him is an aspect of her desire to manipulate others. As their walk takes them near the cemetery they meet Mrs. Sammille. While they are talking to her, they become transfixed by the sight of the graves opening. Mrs. Sammille shrieks and disappears into a small shed at the edge of the cemetery. Adela screams and starts running, pursued by Hugh shouting that the illusion was caused by the wind blowing up loose earth on the graves. His mind clears rapidly, and just as quickly his love fades, so that he gives up the pursuit.

Adela's wild flight leads her instinctively to the house of the man who she knows idolizes her, but when she looks through the window she too sees the image of herself which his diseased imagination has created, and she collapses in terror. Found by a policeman and taken home, she awakens delirious with the impression that she has forgotten her part in the play, a key passage about perception and love. When Pauline calls to see her, Adela insists that Pauline must find Mrs. Sammille in the shed by the cemetery, to give her Adela's part, and thus make her well. Pauline, sensing that Lily Sammille is in fact Lilith, the image of false love, tries to offer Adela her own help in recovering her part, but she finds that only by promising to look for the old woman can she ease the tortured spirit.

The climax of love's triumph over death in the novel comes when Pauline goes, as she went out into the night at the request of her dying grandmother, to confront Lily Sammille in the cemetery shed. Recognizing her as the illusion rather than the reality of love, Pauline rejects her promises of rewards with a laugh of such pure contented joy that Lilith and her murky retreat dissolve into

the dust and rubble of an old unused shed that has collapsed from her strong push on the door. In attempting to bear Adela's burden, Pauline has thus found the completion of her own part in the drama of Battle Hill and is ready to leave for London. Seen off on the train by Stanhope, who says his own role is to comfort the many people in the community who are ill, she looks forward with joy to her new life in the city. Lawrence Wentworth travels on the same train but refuses her company and goes in a daze to a historian's dinner at which his lifelong historical rival is honored and he himself sinks into complete insensibility.

The surrealistic effect of supernatural events taking place in a natural setting is the keynote of Charles Williams' narrative treatment of spiritual experience. Ordinary life is revealed as an image of a deeper reality. The play in which all the characters are involved becomes an image of life itself in which each person must perfect his own role in harmony with others. The setting of Battle Hill suggests the hill of Golgotha, and Lily Sammille's lair is revealed to Pauline as an aspect of Gomorrah. For Wentworth the journey into the city becomes the way to Gomorrah; but Pauline's destination is the eternal City. She tells Stanhope that it seems funny to be discussing the times of trains to the new Jerusalem, but for the poet the interdependence of the temporal and

the eternal is fully assimilated fact.

The characterization, like the plot, is determined by the theme. Only Pauline Anstruther and Lawrence Wentworth, who experience salvation and damnation respectively, are fully delineated. The other characters are sketched in with just enough detail to give them substance as examples of different aspects of love. Stanhope and Mrs. Anstruther are seen only in relation to Pauline, Adela Hunt primarily in contrast to Pauline, and Hugh Prescott in contrast to Wentworth. Williams never falls into the error often attributed to Milton and others of making his diabolical characters more attractive than the good ones. Mrs. Sammille is described with a few telling details which make her seem real, slightly pathetic, and obscurely repulsive. Peter Stanhope, in contrast, expresses his sanctity through an easy kindness and sense of humor. The essence of goodness is seen as a quality of joy which permeates the lives of those who accept it in love. This joy is reflected not only in the characters but in the style, taking the form of wry humor in the descriptions of the play rehearsals and almost poetic rhapsody in the passages of mystical experience. The great variety in style and mood emphasizes Williams's conviction, exemplified in the plot, that reality in human life exists in multiple planes of time and space.

THE DESCENT OF MAN, AND SELECTION IN RELATION TO SEX

Type of work: Biological study
Author: Charles Darwin (1809-1882)
First published: 1871

Although *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* has been condemned by intelligent men as little more than sophisticated drivel, most of Darwin's critics consider it to stand second only to *On the Origin of Species*. Problems beset Darwin when he turned from his brilliant biological study of 1859

to the more particular analysis of the relation of man to the natural world. These problems are immediately seen in the organization of this long argument: well over two-thirds of the book is a digression, exhaustive and often exhausting, on sexual selection. The book lacks the inspiration of *On the Origin of Species*,

but in its summary and evaluation of the anthropological thought after the publication of that earlier masterpiece *The Descent of Man* is one of the most important books of the nineteenth century.

In his introduction Darwin says that he plans to consider three things: whether man descended from some pre-existing form, how he developed if indeed he did descend, and what value the differences between races have to such a development. He draws evidence of the descent of man from his vast knowledge of medicine and biology. That man shares bodily structure, embryonic development, and rudimentary organs with other mammals seems to him to be evidence enough for asserting a common ancestry. Since anthropologists and paleontologists had not at that time discovered significant relics of prehistoric man, Darwin's affirmation of the descent of man was based on logic alone; thus he amasses an almost overwhelming number of analogies to strengthen his case. These analogies enable him to trace the development of man from lower animals, but in order to do so he must assume a definition of man. Darwin maintains that man's uniqueness is not due to any one characteristic but to a combination of many: upright position, acquisition of language and tools, a delicate and free hand, and superior mental powers. In the possession of these traits man is different only in degree. In fact, Darwin musters evidence to show that animals have curiosity, imagination, attention, and reason, attributes that earlier philosophers thought set man apart from the rest of the animal world.

Writing as a biologist, not a moral philosopher or a theologian, Darwin does not try to consider all the implications of his theory. The single attribute that separates man from the rest of the animal world, Darwin thinks, is moral sense. But moral sense, the offspring of conscience, was the result of an evolutionary process; conscience came to early man from a struggle between duty (sympathy and the social instincts) and desire (the urge for com-

plete freedom). The belief in God also evolved, originating in dreams and developing through "spiritual agencies" into gods. It was this application, a logical outcome of Darwin's theories, that horrified both conservative Christians and idealistic philosophers, for the theory completely eliminated the validity of revelation or of supramundane enlightenment.

Darwin, well aware of the implications of his theory, concentrates on the rise of civilization from savagery. Natural selection and the struggle for survival advanced the intellectual powers so that the history of human institutions is the history of the evolution of the intelligence of man. As tribes grew stronger, the members learned to perceive the consequences of their actions, thereby developing moral sense. Then, as man became more and more aware of his moral sense, advanced civilizations with sophisticated religions and technologies were able to develop.

This discussion of the rise of civilization brings Darwin to the differences between races. Because individual members of different races can be mated so as to form fertile offspring and because the similarities between races far outnumber the differences, Darwin assumes that races are "sub-breeds" of the species. Furthermore, Darwin discards the hypotheses that each race descended from a primal pair, that the racial differences were caused by the conditions of life, and that the races evolved independently. The only theory that can explain the differences between races is sexual selection. The question of sexual selection, necessary to prove his assumption about race, leads Darwin into the digression that fills two-thirds of his book.

In *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin had based his theory of evolution primarily on natural selection or the struggle for survival. In other words, a slight modification in an animal's structure might allow it to survive whereas another animal that lacked this modification would die.

Existence, then, is a continual warfare in which the animal with the slight advantage always wins. In *The Descent of Man* Darwin considerably modifies his view of nature by analyzing sexual selection, a different kind of biological warfare. When animals have their sexes separated, the male and female organs of reproduction differ; these are primary sexual characters. But there are other differences not directly connected with the act of reproduction, and these are secondary sexual characters. Usually the males have the most pronounced secondary sexual characters (for example, the brilliant plumage of many male birds); the males acquired these characters not from being better fitted for existence (natural selection) but from having gained advantage over other males and having transmitted their advantages to male offspring. There are usually more males than females, so that there is a struggle between males for the possession of the female; hence the female has the opportunity of selecting one out of several males. The strongest females would have first choice among the males; therefore, the secondary sexual characters that pass through the strongest male and female would have the most chance of outnumbering those characters that pass through weaker partners. In this way, the dominant characters are also the strongest. The more active the rivalry between the males, the more pronounced will be the variations between male and female, the female having remained unmodified because she does not enter into the competition.

Basing his analysis of the animal world upon these principles, Darwin begins with the lower classes of the animal kingdom. In the lowest classes these characters are absent because most often the sexes are joined in the same individual, but in the sub-kingdom of the Arthropoda undoubtable examples of secondary

sexual characters appear. Darwin presents his most convincing case, however, in his long discussions on insects and birds. In both of these sub-kingdoms the characters are so clearly noticeable that Darwin can accumulate material until he overwhelms the reader in a *tour de force*; the reader is presented with so much detailed information that he is willing to accept the evidence submitted before Darwin applies his principles to man.

The secondary sexual characters of man are more complex than those of birds or insects because man is more complex, but this is a difference only in degree. The adult male, for example, has a beard and hairiness of the body (although there is wide variation between tribes or races); he loves to fight and hence has greater endurance and strength than the female. Because of his love of battle, the male has a delight in competition and develops his intellect more than woman, who is consequently more tender and less selfish. Having noted a few of these characters, Darwin asks how they came to be. Because men vied with one another for the woman, the choice of the woman led to certain secondary sexual characters. For example, racial differences are the result of ancient concepts of beauty; the remote ancestors of the Negro race preferred women who were dark-skinned and flat-nosed. Thus, Darwin is able to describe the differences between races without violating his basic theory of the descent of man from lower forms of life.

Darwin anxiously waited for the publication of *The Descent of Man* and was surprised when he discovered that people were interested but not shocked. In fact, the book was anticlimactical. The disturbance caused by *On the Origin of Species* had calmed and was not again stirred up, and *The Descent of Man* became, as it should have, a book primarily for biologists.

THE DIARIES OF KAFKA: 1910-1923

Type of work: Journals

Author: Franz Kafka (1883-1924)

First published: 1948-1949

Around the turn of the century and continuing until the years following World War I, a circle of German writers in Prague exerted great influence on German literature. Franz Werfel, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Max Brod were the most widely read authors of this group, but in the closing decades of the period Franz Kafka, sometimes called the author of anxiety, found an ever increasing audience. Biographers of Kafka complain that his short life does not offer anything dramatic to report: his existence could be termed provincial because the major part of his life, except for a short period of travel, was spent within a few city blocks in Prague. His father was a merchant and his mother the daughter of a brewery owner. The family, financially well-to-do, tried to maintain a nineteenth century upper-class living standard: French governess, humanistic education for the children, and efforts to preserve a bourgeois concept of German culture. The sensitive Kafka found no understanding at home; he had almost no communication with his family and the Jewish faith practiced by his parents offered him few consolations. Thus Kafka grew up in a withdrawn isolation, constantly groping for some kind of salvation which he could only find in his writings. He earned a doctor of law degree and worked for fourteen years with an insurance company.

Kafka's continuous anxiety of being directed by forces over which he had no control and about which he had no knowledge is superbly described in his best-known novel *The Trial*; however, it is in his diaries that he reveals most about his motivations and his innermost feelings. His friend and fellow writer, Max Brod, has published these diaries with the care of a loving friend, though admitting the omission of a few intimate entries.

The diary was compiled out of thirteen notebooks. The first dated entry is May 17, 1910; last notes were written in the summer of 1923. There are also three travel diaries covering Kafka's travels in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France during the years 1911 and 1912. Since these entries are quite different from the usual character of the diary, the travel journals have been separated from the rest.

The diary was a necessity for Kafka, who said that the advantage in keeping one is that it gives awareness of change in thought and feeling. When he realizes that he has neglected his diary, he promises that he will continue to keep it because it is the only place where he can hold on to experience. His urge to write was the safety valve for the hypersensitive and withdrawn Kafka, a means of relieving his anxieties through writing down his deepest feelings so that later he could reverse the process. Literature is his only obsession because, he wrote, literature was the only thing that did not bore him. Whether this fact was only in his mind does not disturb him. He feels that he can only observe family life, not participate in it.

Contemporary historic events are without interest to him. His entry on August 2, 1914, when World War I started, notes that Germany has declared war on Russia and that he went swimming in the afternoon. He is conscious of the direction of his work and states that his fate as a writer will be to record his inner life of dreams; he feels that his life has dwindled and will continue to dwindle, but this record is the only kind of writing that will satisfy him.

The silent stroller along the streets and parks of Prague is a most inquisitive observer of people and events as he ponders

on their work, their salaries, what they will be doing tomorrow, how life in their old age will be, their sleeping habits, if he could do their jobs, or how he would like doing another man's work. In spite of his talent, writing is to him an arduous task, as if he were drawing words out of empty air. Sometimes he worries about his emotional state and the struggle to find adequate words. He feels as though he is his own tombstone, that every word he puts down slaps against the next; he hears the consonants rub heavily against one another and the vowels accompany them as though they were minstrel-show Negroes.

Kafka is his own critic and seldom finds reason to be satisfied. He is sure that his preconceived ideas are dry, flat, and embarrassing to those around him. Worst of all, he feels that his ideas remain incomplete, even when he has put them down exactly as he has conceived them. He accuses himself frequently of failing and laments, while looking at a simple girl's dress, that he seldom succeeds in creating anything truly beautiful. Besides the lack of understanding shown toward his writing ambitions by his parents, his employment by an insurance firm conflicts with his literary work, and he longs to be freed of the confining office. Only when his illness becomes critical does he leave off seeing people. His earlier works were written in his parents' home. His constant struggle with noise is shown in a passage telling how he can hear every sound in the house: the front door, the oven door, singing, and house-cleaning.

Kafka knew that he was not capable of married life, but he also hated the life of a bachelor. He feared becoming an old man fighting to retain his dignity while begging for an invitation when the need for companionship was felt, or the dreariness of carrying home his meals, not returning home to a calm spouse. He was three times engaged, twice to the same girl, yet all efforts to find a partner for life failed. His self-examination provides

entries which indicate that he was striving to come to terms with his surroundings, to know the whole of the human and animal community, to reduce life to simplified forms and rules: to make his life conform to these rules as quickly as he could so that he could retain favor in the eyes of the whole world. However, his opinions on basic subjects are unpromising. He said that education is part of an adult conspiracy in dealing with children.

The diaries contain many notations which demonstrate Kafka's fierce struggles with symptoms of fear, and he states that only devils could account for the misfortunes in men's lives. There are a great number of story ideas among the entries. Some are well known to Kafka readers. A great many more fragments leave the reader with the regretful realization that this life ended too soon to complete the outpouring of his unique imaginative power. In the words of Albert Camus, everything in Kafka's work is meaningful.

The travel diary reveals a lesser known side of his talent. Because he was absorbed in recording experiences outside himself, he was able to interject some humorous notes, as in his description of a linguistic encounter during a train ride in Italy. He states that the Italian language when spoken commands one's attention whether or not what is being said can be understood, even though one who is uncertain of his Italian cannot prevail against the fluent Italian speaker.

Kafka was not afraid of death. Several years before his illness he wrote that he would be content on his deathbed if the pain were not too great; he believed that the best of his writing revealed his serenity and contentment in the face of death. But a death without pain was not destined for Kafka. As his tuberculosis progressed, the entries of the diary reflect his anxiety of losing the strength to keep on writing. The entries become shorter. One of the last entries, written on June 12, 1923, states that his days and nights are

filled with pain, almost without interruption.

Kafka died in a sanatorium near Vienna on June 3, 1924. In spite of the many volumes which now have been written about him, it still appears that he defies any clear definition in literary terms. A minority of critics feel that his mastery of the German language is limited because he lived in linguistic isolation and never was part of the contemporary stream of German writing. The German spoken in Prague did not encompass the *avant-garde* innovations which flourished shortly before and after World War I in Germany and Switzerland. But the strength of Kafka's style seems to derive from this lack of partici-

pation in literary fashions; it left him with simple word choices which expressed even more poignantly the complexities of his imaginary inner world. Whatever the criteria may be, it is undeniable that Kafka is today, in the words of a German critic, a "focal-point author." One of Kafka's few friends, Milena Jesenská, wrote that he stood beside mankind and looked at humanity in amazement, that he exposed himself to life like a naked man among the clothed. The nakedness of innocence, of wonder, of the mystery of creation in art, is clearly revealed in his diaries. The document is human because a man of deep sensibility is speaking.

THE DIARY AND LETTERS OF MME. D'ARBLAY

Type of work: Epistolary journal

Author: Fanny Burney (Mme. d'Arblay, 1752-1840)

First published: 1842

Principal personages:

FANNY BURNLEY, later MME. D'ARBLAY

ESTHER SLEEPE BURNLEY, her mother

DR. CHARLES BURNLEY, her father

CHARLES, her brother

SUSANNA ("SUZY") ELIZABETH and

CHARLOTTE ANN, her sisters

ELIZABETH BURNLEY, her stepmother

SARAH HARRIET ("Hetty") and

SALLY, her half sisters

STEPHEN ALLEN, her step-brother

MARIA ALLEN and

ELIZABETH ALLEN, her step-sisters

GENERAL ALEXANDRE D'ARBLAY, her husband

MRS. HESTER THRALE PIOZZI

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

JAMES BOSWELL

KING GEORGE III

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

CHARLES MAURICE DE TALLEYRAND-PÉRIGORD

MADAME DE STAËL

DAVID GARRICK

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

From the first entry in the diary of a sixteen-year-old girl to the last letter written by an old lady seventy-one years later, Fanny Burney's record of her ex-

periences covers an enthralling range of personalities and events. As a daughter in the talented household of Dr. Charles Burney, the first music historian, a liter-

ary young woman in Dr. Johnson's London, a lady-in-waiting at the court of King George III, the wife of a French exile after the Revolution, a resident in Paris during the Empire, and finally a lonely widow in Jane Austen's Bath, Fanny Burney d'Arblay was a perceptive and witty observer behind the scenes that have become history. Her remarkable balance of passionate involvement and ironic detachment achieved a unique synthesis of autobiography and social history.

The diary begins with a young girl's self-dramatization in its statement of purpose: "To have some account of my thoughts, manners, acquaintance and actions, when the hour arrives in which time is more nimble than memory, is the reason which induces me to keep a Journal. A Journal in which I must confess my *every* thought, must open my whole heart!" With innate literary discrimination, she realized that it would be more effective if addressed to an imaginary intimate; but the only confidante to whom she could reveal all her secrets was "Nobody."

To Nobody, then, will I write my Journal! since to Nobody can I be wholly unreserved—to Nobody can I reveal every thought, every wish of my heart, with the most unlimited confidence, the most unrelenting sincerity to the end of my life!

Her embarrassment when her father found her journal; her excitement at every meeting with Mr. Garrick, a frequent visitor in the Burney household; her admiration for Miss Linley, the singer who eloped with Sheridan—all were increasingly tempered by her sense of humor, as in her account of a sailing excursion:

The waves foamed in little white mountains rising above the green surface of the sea; they dashed against the rocks off the coast of Brixham with monstrous fury; and really to own the truth, I felt no inclination to be boat wrecked, however pathetic and moving a Tale our adventure might have made.

Taking herself and her diary less seriously in her early twenties, she confessed that she had burned everything she had written up to her fifteenth year, "thinking I grew too old for scribbling nonsense, but as I am less young, I grow, I fear, less wise, for I cannot any longer resist what I find to be irresistible, the pleasure of popping down my thoughts from time to time on paper."

The purpose and technique of Fanny's early diary formed the basis of the novel which first brought her recognition: "I doubt not but this memorable affair [publication of *Evelina*] will, in future times, mark the period whence chronologers will date the zenith of the polite arts in this island!" This characteristic of poking fun at herself reveals the objectivity with which the character of *Evelina* was created. The sentimental heroine, pouring out her heart in a long series of voluminous letters to her guardian, expresses not the author's view of the world, but the author's view of how the world appears to a naïve girl of seventeen. Published first under a pseudonym, *Evelina* became an immediate hit, and some of the most delightful passages in the diary are the accounts of Fanny Burney's unaffected pride in its success and amusement at everyone's attempts to guess the identity of the author. She seemed to enjoy the mystery more than the praise heaped upon her when the secret became known, but that too was sweet when it came from Dr. Johnson: "I almost poked myself under the table. Never did I feel so delicious a confusion since I was born!"

From 1777, when she first met Dr. Johnson, until 1784, when she visited him regularly during his last illness, Fanny Burney filled her journal with conversations which she claimed to remember almost verbatim. Although Johnson was often violent or overbearing in his arguments with fellow critics, his manner to Fanny was always kindly and courteous. The scenes in Mrs. Thrall's drawing room, in Sir Joshua Reynolds' dining room, or in Dr. Johnson's own

small parlor, where Fanny met the blue-stocking ladies of Mrs. Thrale's circle and the literary men of the doctor's circle, sparkle with wit and polished repartee; but Dr. Johnson is more genial when seen through Fanny's eyes than through Boswell's. Five years after the death of their revered friend, just before the publication of Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, Fanny met Boswell at Windsor and was embarrassed by his request for some of Johnson's letters to herself, to show him in a new light as "gay Sam, agreeable Sam, pleasant Sam." She refused his request, but she has performed the same service for Dr. Johnson in her own recollections of his talk.

During the summer before Dr. Johnson's death, Fanny had lost another friend, Mrs. Hester Thrale, through opposition to her marriage to the Italian tenor, Gabriel Piozzi. With the literary circle thus broken, Fanny's scope became socially wider, though intellectually narrower. She was introduced to Queen Charlotte, whom she found charming, and who was so impressed with the novelist that she offered her a position at court as a Keeper of the Wardrobes. Fanny felt too honored to refuse the appointment, but she had grave doubts about sacrificing her independence for the rigid routine of court life. Her doubts proved amply justified during her five-year stint, but even when her hours on duty were from six o'clock in the morning until after midnight, she usually found time to record some of her experiences. Her devotion to the royal family, her dislike of her German superior, her conscientious attitude about her duty, and her sharply observant eye and mocking wit combine to give a vivid picture of life at the court of King George III. In a letter to a sister, Fanny explained the etiquette of deportment in the royal presence:

In the third place, you must not, upon any account, stir either hand or foot. If, by chance, a black pin runs into your head, you must be sure to

bear it without wincing; if it brings tears into your eyes, you must not wipe them off; if they give you a tingling by running down your cheeks, you must look as if nothing was the matter. . . . If, however, the agony is very great, you may, privately, bite the inside of your cheek, or of your lips, for a little relief: taking care, meanwhile, to do it so cautiously as to make no apparent dent outwardly. And, with that precaution, if you even gnaw a piece out, it will not be minded, only be sure either to swallow it, or commit it to a corner of the inside of your mouth till they are gone—for you must not spit.

This whimsical cynicism was dubious for a beginner in court duties, but Fanny's admiration for members of the royal family seemed unaffected by her impatience with formality. Her account of the assassination attempt in 1786 is typical. When she first heard the news she was "almost petrified with horror at the intelligence. If this King is not safe,—good, pious, beneficent as he is,—if his life is in danger, from his own subjects, what is to guard the Throne? and which way is a monarch to be secure?" She was particularly impressed by the fact that the king, on his return to his weeping family ". . . with the gayest good-humour, did his utmost to comfort them; and he gave a relation of the affair, with a calmness and unconcern that, had any one but himself been his hero, would have been regarded as totally unfeeling." In giving her family an accurate account to correct the rumors they had heard, Fanny stressed the way in which the king stopped the crowd from attacking his mad assailant and insisted that she should be taken care of.

This emphasis on the king's goodness was maintained throughout the record of the sad period of his own madness. After some months of illness he seemed greatly changed:

I had a sort of conference with his Majesty, or rather I was the object to whom he spoke, with a manner so un-

common, that a high fever alone could account for it; a rapidity, a hoarseness of voice, a volubility, an earnestness—a vehemence, rather—it startled me inexpressibly; yet with a graciousness exceeding even all I ever met with before—it was almost kindness! Heaven—Heaven preserve him!”

Months later Fanny met him by accident in Kew gardens, tried to slip away, and was terrified when he ran after her. When both of them were stopped by his attendants, she was surprised to meet “all his wonted benignity of countenance, though something still of wildness in his eyes,” and even more astonished when he kissed her on the cheek. Her observation on this action reveals as much of her own character as of his: “. . . it was but the joy of a heart unbridled, now, by the forms and proprieties of established custom and sober reason. To see any of his household thus by accident seemed such a near approach to liberty and recovery that who can wonder it should serve rather to elate than lessen what yet remains of his disorder!” Seeing George III through Fanny Burney’s eyes alters more perspectives than does seeing Dr. Johnson in a different light.

One of Fanny’s most interesting assignments was to attend the trial of Warren Hastings in order to give the queen an accurate account of the proceedings. The long passages in her diary reveal her relief at this occasional freedom from formality of the court and her delight in the opportunity to see her London friends. Her comments on who was there and with whom, who spoke to whom and to whom one could not speak, are reminiscent of dialogue in Restoration comedy, but her reaction to Hastings himself was in terms of tragedy: “What an awful moment for such a man!—a man fallen from such a height of power to a situation so humiliating.” She also followed the main stages of the trial with alert intelligence, so that she was able to give the chancellor’s opening speech from memory: “The newspapers have printed it far less accu-

ately than I have retained it, though I am by no means exact or secure.” Of the speech by Edmund Burke which she heard, she gave no particulars because she assumed it would be accurately printed, but she praised her friend’s eloquence while disagreeing with his views. She revealed the influence of Johnson when she wrote: “When he narrated, he was easy, flowing, and natural; when he declaimed, energetic, warm, and brilliant.”

Close though she was to the great affairs of her day, Fanny Burney was occupied for most of her five years at court with the domestic life of the royal family. Because of a demanding schedule, long hours, cold palace passages, and draughty carriages, her health declined. At last she resigned her post and went to live again with her father. But within a year, while staying with friends in the country, she was again drawn as by a magnet into an important circle, a group of French exiles which included Talleyrand and Madame de Staël. Engaged as their tutor in English, she soon married M. d’Arblay and thus began a new life when she was nearly forty. After 1800 her husband was able to go back to France, where they lived until 1815, when d’Arblay was appointed a commander of the king’s bodyguard and sent Fanny with other refugees to Brussels. Her narrative of the events of the Hundred Days, and particularly of Brussels during the Battle of Waterloo, though written some years later, preserved the balance of emotional involvement and critical detachment that characterizes the entire journal. During her last twenty-three years of life as a widow settled in Bath, she was busy editing her father’s paper, revising her own diaries, and sorting out her letters, in a spirit more critical than sentimental:

For the rest of my life I shall take charge and save my own executor the discretionary labours that with myself are almost endless; for I now regularly destroy all letters that either may eventually do mischief, however clever, or

that contain nothing of instruction or entertainment, however innocent. This, which I announce to all my correspondents who write confidentially, occasions my receiving letters that are real conversations.

Because Fanny Burney's own diaries and letters were always real conversations, they provide an atmosphere as well as a record of her times. Her style was sometimes colloquial, sometimes Johnsonian, depending on her subject. The death of her old friend, Mrs. Hester Thrale Piozzi, led to a comparison be-

tween her and Madame de Staël in the manner of the *Lives of the Poets*:

Their conversation was equally luminous, from the sources of their own fertile minds, and from their splendid acquisitions from the works and acquirements of others. Both were zealous to serve, liberal to bestow, and graceful to oblige and praising whatever was admirable that came in their way.

In this passage, as throughout her journal, both in what she says and in the way she says it, Fanny Burney throws a light upon her times in which she herself stands clearly revealed.

DIARY OF A WRITER

Type of work: Periodical journalism

Author: Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevski (1821-1881)

First published: 1873, 1876-1878, 1880, 1881

Dostoevski began his series of articles in the Petersburg *Citizen* with the plan of talking in an informal way about any subject in current events that impressed or appealed to him. He did not intend the articles to be a specifically literary endeavor and they are not, although literary subjects appear frequently. Nor did he intend his writing to be predominantly political, although he expounds his political philosophy and his slavophilic ideas at intervals throughout. This was to be a personal and freely-ranging undertaking; hence he called it a diary. It combines characteristics found in current journalism, column, editorial, and feature story. The style is flowing, associative, digressive.

The author frequently and half humorously complains that he is having no success in keeping to his main subject because the things which were intended to take up but a few words have absorbed all the space. In fact, the announced subjects are often but launching points for what Dostoevski really has to say. At the end of the 1876 issues, he admits that his main object in writing the *Diary* is to explain the ideas of Russia's national spirit-

ual independence, that is, the qualities of the human mind and heart as he observes them in his countrymen. Always fascinated by the consciousness and emotions of people all of kinds, Dostoevski makes many profound observations, and the pages of his *Diary* reveal keen observation and sensitivity to our essential humanity. This prime interest accounts for the rambling and discursive form of his writings. As he explains, he writes of the things he has seen, heard, read. But in life, these things do not fit together, do not form patterns. All is strange, all is "segregation." The lack of order and coherence in his writings mirrors the disorder and unrest in life, which are his true subject: what life is like in Russia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Dostoevski shows the quirks and quiddities of the Russian character by sketches, by narrated incidents, and by simple rumination. A visit he made to a mineral-water spa provides him with material for comments about railway traveling, social behavior, particularly the propensity of many Russians for speaking poor French rather than good Russian. Dostoevski analyzes this affectation and

criticizes it. He is quick to see the faults of his countrymen: their simplicity, their lying, their dissipations. He observes that most men are not bad but wretched, a situation that may be attributed partly to the social confusion in the country after the liberation of the peasants in 1861, when many Russians could not be secure in their identities or their social positions. The writer observes that everybody wants to revenge himself on the world for his own nullity. Because people lack an outlet to express their identities, they feel neglected and faceless; they debauch, they drink, they write anonymous letters to newspapers. However, he insists, the Russian people should be judged not by their villainies but by the great and holy things they long for, even while they are committing wrongs. In the long run, he argues, Russia will be redeemed because her problems all arise from errors of the mind, not of the heart. Errors of the mind are easily remedied, by the very logic of events in life. But errors of the heart are a spiritual blindness that refuses to be cured, and would sooner destroy everything in the world.

Dostoevski feels that Russia needs a greater sense of solidarity, both personally and politically, for a sound cohesive sentiment is happiness in the life of a nation. He points toward the time, before Peter the Great, when Russia was isolationist and contrasts it with the present time, when Russians try to love Europeans, become Europeans. He talks of Germany's problems as it strove to become a single nation and sees there a parallel for Russia's problems, makes political predictions, returns to them later to comment upon their working out, discusses Russia's finances, makes plans, explains how he has formulated them and even how he is expressing them. There is no strict method in his political musings; he explores topics as they occur to him: Russia's struggles against the Turkish empire, its relations with Europe, general problems of religion—can it prevail?—the Pope, European politics, personalities,

patriots and politicians. War, he decides, need not always be a scourge. Sometimes it can be a salvation, if the people need it and are ready for it. His conclusion is that the changes which are occurring around the world ought not to be feared but welcomed by Russia; because her mission is a true and lofty one, the country will endure anything and always emerge triumphant.

More appealing and important than politics for readers of the *Diary* are Dostoevski's discussions of minor immediate and everyday events. In these he demonstrates his real knowledge of the human heart. He returns often to the theme of alienation and the breaking of old ties. A visit to the village in which he grew up leads him to ruminate about his childhood, childhood in general, the nature of families and the changing values in the family situation. He finds a blurring of family identity, an increasing casualness toward the old ties, that he regrets. The education of children, and their peculiar charm, are related subjects he speaks on.

Current newspaper accounts involving children often come up for comment in the *Diary*: trials of parents for cruelty to children are discussed at great length, and also digressively. Dostoevski begins a discussion of the ethical considerations of lawyers apropos of a particular case, then says in effect that since he knows little about law, he will talk about talent in general. And he proceeds to do so. But eventually, as always, he returns to his topic. His breadth of mind constantly suggests to him new ideas related by association to the starting ones, and his pen is given free rein.

News stories of the deaths of children attract him and lead him into a consideration of Tolstoy's *Childhood and Youth*. Suicides are another kind of news item that provokes a response from Dostoevski. He relates long histories of suicides, speculates upon the forces that drive a man to such an extreme, and the sort of character that can accomplish self-destruction. He devotes one issue of the *Diary* to a

short story called "The Meek One," which consists of a man's monologue just after his wife has committed suicide.

Life reminds Dostoevski of literature as faithfully as literature embodies life. Despite his frequent remarks that he does not mean to deal directly with literature and criticism, he is often led into it because, as he explains, the *Diary* is meant as a record of his impressions and his strongest impressions are about literature. The death of George Sand in 1876 occasions a long discussion of her popularity as a novelist, her heroines, her religion. Besides "The Meek One," Dostoevski produces another short story called "The Dream of a Strange Man," and also gives a sketch of his plan for a satiric novel. He broods lovingly over Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and its knowledge of the heart. The single issue of the *Diary* for August, 1880, consists of the text of a famous ad-

dress on Pushkin that Dostoevski made to a literary society earlier that year. The significance of Pushkin for Russia, he says, is that he was the first to recognize and portray in literature the negative type of man, who is restless, suffering, without faith or cooperation, refusing to be reconciled to his world. Pushkin's universal susceptibility allowed him truly to capture the artistic beauty of the Russian spirit. There is for Dostoevski the essence of the Russian personality in this type of man, and Pushkin himself is its perfection.

The *Diary* met with immense acclaim during the years it appeared, but the author's death in 1881 cut short the publication of what had been, and still is, a continuing document of a sensitive man's confrontation of his world and the meaning he found in it.

THE DIARY OF HENRY CRABB ROBINSON

Type of work: Diary, reminiscences, and correspondence

Author: Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867)

First published: 1870

Because of his passion for literature and metaphysics, and his special affinity for knowing those men of his time who were worth knowing, Henry Crabb Robinson managed to encompass in his person many of the significant intellectual trends of the first half of the nineteenth century. His *Diary* reveals him as a highly characteristic post-Enlightenment mind; his encounters with German, French, and particularly English literary figures have produced a mine of information about the special temper of exuberance during the period; yet there emerges from the work as well the picture of a modest and engaging man. While still a young man, having turned to the Law for a living, he realized he could never become great; but he never ceased to follow the lure of the controversial ideas and outstanding men of his age. His mild demeanor, his exquisite tact and generosity,

made him the friend of writers as various as Goethe, Wordsworth, Blake, Lamb, Landor, and Coleridge.

Robinson's life as he recorded it in the *Diary* was outwardly uneventful, yet full of pleasurable transitions from introspection to social intercourse. He never married, but the range of his acquaintances and friendships was enormous, as was the extent of his correspondence. Yet we also have frequent glimpses of the solitary Robinson, alone in a room reading voluminously in the philosophy and literature of his contemporaries, cultivating his *Diary*, or traveling on the Continent to improve his mind.

Robinson was born on May 13, 1775, at Bury St. Edmunds. His childhood was a happy one; however, because the Robinsons were Dissenters he was excluded from education at a public school or a university, and at age fifteen he was arti-

cled as a law clerk to a Colchester attorney. During the next few years he went to see John Wesley preach, rejoiced at the outbreak of the French Revolution, became a Jacobin, and read Godwin's *Political Justice*. Then after an unsettled life in London during the closing years of the eighteenth century, a time when he began in earnest his reading and theater-going habits and developed a mature interest in politics, he went to Germany in 1800 with money from a legacy. The next five years of independent travel and study in Germany were the crucial period of his life. With no settled plans, he began to absorb the German language and culture. By the time he returned home, he had traveled widely in Germany, had read deeply in its literature and in the emerging transcendental philosophy, had known Weimar in its great days and talked with Goethe, Schiller, Brentano, Voss, and many others. With Coleridge and Carlyle, he became one of the first English Germanophiles, an extremely eloquent advocate, for example, of the strengths and beauties of Goethe in literature and of Kant in philosophy. If the formative influence of Germany on English thought during the period between 1810 and 1850 can hardly be overrated, Robinson himself deserves much of the credit.

At Frankfurt, his first major stop, Robinson became acquainted with the poet Clemens Brentano. In July, 1801, he moved on to Grimma where, with great difficulty, he began reading Kant in earnest. After meeting Goethe and Herder at Weimar, he remarked on Goethe's immense dignity and oppressive handsomeness. Finally he settled at Jena, enrolled in the University there, and began studies in Latin and Greek and in contemporary German writing. He heard Schelling's lectures on aesthetics and thought them obscure; his acute sympathetic insight and strength of mind won him an intimacy with von Knebel; while at the same time he indulged in some good-natured student clowning, got into

trouble for parodying an inept professor named Eichstädt, and was friendly enough with his fellow students to learn a good deal about their secret dueling societies. In 1804 he met Mme. de Staël. Not knowing Parisian customs, he was puzzled to be shown into her bedroom to meet the great lady as she sat decorously in her bed. In return for her introductions to many of the literary giants of Weimar, Robinson gave her lucid explanations of current German philosophies. He was later to perform the same task of intermediary for English audiences.

After a stay in England, Robinson returned to Germany as a correspondent for *The Times* in 1807. Later he went to Spain, where he covered the revolution in 1808. He left *The Times* during the next year, lived a literary life in London for a time, all the while uncertain of his future, and then in January, 1812, entered the office of a barrister. He went to the bar, he said, to acquire a "gentlemanly independence" and "society with leisure." In spite of his own disclaimers, it is clear that he was an active lawyer on the Norfolk circuit, and an able one; at the end of every year he noted accurately in pounds the steady increase in his income. From this time on he agitated for the reform of legal process in England, and he became an active enemy of the slave trade.

The *Diary* itself begins in 1811, during his thirty-sixth year, at a time when he was solidifying friendships with Blake, Wordsworth, Lamb, and Coleridge. The months on the circuit alternated with summer tours to Wales or the Continent, and Robinson combined with his professional life an amazingly varied round of dinners, lectures, theater-going, reading, and social intercourse with people of all ranks and opinions.

Robinson was fifty-three when, in 1828, he gave up the practice of law to devote himself to self-improvement, talk, and philanthropy. It was during this harvest of leisure that he increased his correspondence, became a mentor to many

young writers, paid hundreds of social visits to the great and the insignificant alike, and watched his old friends die off one by one. In the year of his retirement he was one of the first to buy shares in the recently founded London University, afterwards University College. His long and honorable connection with University College as a member of the Managing Council extended to the time of his death. It was here too that he practiced the art of conversation, which even then was becoming a rare phenomenon and indistinguishable from argument. Henry Crabb Robinson was always an eminently clubbable man, someone who could listen as well as perform, whether he was dining at College or spending his annual Christmas vacation with the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount.

It was as a genial and social man that Robinson was remembered after his death in 1867. As the conversationalist and companion of several generations of Englishmen, he never made an enemy. In fact, this talent for conversation makes the *Diary* a work of continuing importance. Robinson the diarist is a mine of information on nineteenth century literary history. He was one of the first men to argue for the greatness of Goethe and Wordsworth. He saw immediately the significance of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and he was one of the initial supporters of Hazlitt and Keats. He transcribed the opinions, and catalogued the eccentricities, of both Coleridge and Blake; he was the friend of Charles Lamb and it is not insignificant to note that he recorded many of Lamb's best puns. He went to the theater for pleasure and recorded his responses to performances in Weimar and London from the days of Mrs. Siddons, at the turn of the century, to the 1865 performance of *Twelfth Night* with Miss Kate Terry in the title role. Again, over a period of years, he attended the lectures of Coleridge and Hazlitt, of Flaxman on the fine arts, and, later, of Emerson, Faraday, and Carlyle. In many cases his notes are all we possess of those lectures.

Robinson's *Diary* remains one of the most important single contemporary sources on the life and opinions of Wordsworth. He was Wordsworth's contemporary in time and temperament and shared with the poet an enthusiasm for the French Revolution and for Godwin in the 1790's. Both resided in Germany at the turn of the century; both gave their pity and friendship to the unfortunate Lambs; and both profited from the brilliant monologues of Coleridge. They were twice traveling companions on picturesque tours to the Continent. Robinson in the *Diary* evinced an affectionate but skeptical regard for the poet. Often forgetting or garbling his friend's remarks, or merely listening for the sake of pleasure and not transcription, he lacked—to use his own phrase—"the Boswell faculty." Instead, we see Wordsworth *en famille*, or walking around the lake at Grasmere, or wondering whether he ought to travel three hundred miles to London for the Queen's dance, or reacting stoically to the unexpected death of his daughter Dora. Robinson was the intermediary between Wordsworth and Coleridge during their misunderstanding; and his description of the motives and the frequent pettiness of the great men involved is our best record of this literary quarrel. There are accounts as well of Wordsworth on Byron, on Chatterton, on Milton, on the penny post, on politics, on the order in which his poems should be read, as well as some engaging discussion of Wordsworth's faults and virtues as a friend. This personal material is invaluable. In addition, it is worth noting that Robinson's comments on Wordsworth's poems are just and often demonstrate an acute knowledge of their texture, spirit, and relative importance. Almost all of Robinson's correspondence, particularly that with Wordsworth, exhibits an intense literary discussion of a sort unknown in our day in personal letters.

Often enough Robinson was a prosy and unselective diarist. One is obliged to use the index to find topics and names of

importance. But he was alert to much of the best writing and talking of his age, and he himself evoked a portion of that intellectual activity. Obviously the thread of his own life as it is conveyed by his memoranda is for us not so important as

the particulars of interesting men which the *Diary* preserves. Nevertheless his day to day jottings show him as a shrewd and generous man, possessed with a keen scent for literary and human greatness and a marvelous capacity for friendship.

THE DINNER PARTY

Type of work: Novel

Author: Claude Mauriac (1914-)

Time: The present

Locale: Paris

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

BERTRAND CARNÉJOUX, the host, an editor and novelist

MARTINE (PILOU) CARNÉJOUX, his wife

EUGÉNIE PRIEUR, an aging belle of Parisian society

GILLES BELLECROIX, a scenarist and aspiring novelist

LUCIENNE OSBORN, the egocentric wife of an American film producer

ROLAND SOULAIRES, a rich but frustrated bachelor

MARIE-ANGE (MARIETTA) VASGNE, an actress, mistress to Bertrand

JÉRÔME ARGULF, a childhood friend of Martine and a substitute guest

The Dinner Party is an experimental novel in the sense that it employs devices which would have amounted to experiment thirty or forty years ago: no narrator; no identification of speakers except by subject matter, leitmotif, or an occasional self-apostrophe; a fusion of conversation and soliloquy; the cross currents of two or three different subjects—stichomythic or protracted; and the illusion of simultaneity in the varied mental associations evoked by some passing remark. The difficulties of following such a presentation of multiple experience are only initial, being resolved in the development of character patterns which emerge despite the loss in translation of the uniqueness of language assigned to individual characters.

But if the experimental novel has become the sub-species of a traditional one, an example should not be dismissed as merely one more repetitive experiment but must be assessed as a work of art in an established medium. Claude Mauriac's performance in *The Dinner Party* is an impressive one. To treat at book length the incidental chatter and random mus-

ings of eight people during a dining period of perhaps two hours is the kind of *tour de force* liable to a reaction of boredom on a reader's part. But without telling a very significant story or symbolizing any extensive meaning, Mauriac sustains his kaleidoscope of sophisticated sensibilities with remarkable intensity. Not a single character in the book emerges as a great or memorable one; their relations to one another are rather trivial, in fact represent clichés of the *beau monde*.

There is no perceptibly dominant theme; all is dinner party experience observed and recorded by means of the dramatic method and the interior monologue. Yet the characters are thoroughly interesting people. Their talk—about history, about aristocratic genealogy, about literature (Proust, Barrès, Anatole France, Graham Greene, and Gerard Manley Hopkins), about astrology, about travel, about God, and even about intellectual parlor games—is generally absorbing, occasionally informative, and often amusing. Their thoughts about one another, about themselves, and about the matters which happen to arise, are com-

pounded of vanity, lust, boredom, jealousy, creative perceptivity, intelligence, insight, and hopeful intentions—all projected with a psychological subtlety and effectiveness which give the book its true unity. Other characters, in the persons of servants like the seductive Armande, or members of fashionable society who are talked about or recalled in memory, add to the dimensions of the emanating reality. Even details of the courses served, descriptions of spots on the table cloth or crumbs on a chair, and appraisals of the quality of the champagne being consumed are brilliantly integrated into the vibrant texture of the writing.

The situation which Claude Mauriac creates out of his assemblage of characters suggests Proust. The atmosphere they breathe is rarified. His people are elegant, aristocratic (or socially pretentious), artistic, and sensual. They are aware of social stratification, youth fading into age, their desire for one another, the interplay of their sensibilities, and the projection of their personae. Bergson hovers over the table: the diners indulge in flights of memory stimulated by simple words or sensations; they consider their future; but everything is focused upon the present moment of consciousness.

There is no head of the table as such, but the host sits as nearly opposite his wife as a round table seating four men and four women will allow. He is Bertrand Carnéjoux, the forty-six-year-old editor of the magazine *Ring* and author of a successful novel entitled *Sober Pleasures* (the original manuscript bore the more revealing title, *Metaphysics of Physical Passion*.) Preëminent in Carnéjoux's mind is the desire to write another novel of even greater artistic integrity, formulated in a new way which will bring into immediate juxtaposition the words and thoughts of his characters. More than once, as he notes his conversation at table, he regrets that he does not find it possible to achieve the same brilliance, the same eloquence when he is at

work over a manuscript in his study. Meanwhile he presides over the party, secure in his knowledge of amorous success with every woman present except one. His conversation is mainly about literature, his thoughts divided between love affairs and plans for writing.

His wife Martine is twenty-six, intimately known as Pilou, and the wealthy and innocent daughter of Irene, one of Bertrand's former mistresses. Throughout the party her thoughts are mainly radiant expressions of love for her two children Rachel and Jean-Paul; but she is also tempted to respond to the attentions of Bellecroix.

Gilles Bellecroix, forty-nine, is a screen writer who is more famous than Bertrand but who is not satisfied inwardly with his achievement. He is obsessed with the idea that he must produce a good novel in order to realize himself. Meanwhile he observes the dinner guests with a cinematic eye, visualizing meaningful scenes in flickers of pose or behavior. Between him and Bertrand there is a latent rivalry which carries over into Gilles's flirtation with Martine, the motion of whose dancing on an earlier occasion is unforgettable to him. But Gilles finds his real center of being in his wife Bénédicte, knows that for him true happiness lies in love, fidelity, monogamy.

Eugénie Prieur, still, at sixty-seven, called "Gigi" by young blades of Paris, is the oldest guest (too old to have been one of Bertrand's conquests), full of rich nostalgic memories, the wisdom of long experience, and an intimate knowledge of social machinations. The perspective with which she endows her world is further documented by her conversations about historic family connections.

Roland Soulaire, forty-five, is temperamentally a Prufrock who hides his fears and insecurity behind his idle dreams and his clever talk with Eugénie about social identification. Extremely wealthy, but fat and bald, he fails to interest the beautiful guest at his left.

She is twenty-four-year-old Marie-Ange Vasgne, formerly named Marietta, a Canadian farm girl, but now a sultry blond model and aspiring actress. Marie-Ange is Bertrand's current mistress who dares near the end of the party to tease him by inquiring after Marie-Plum, another mistress whom Bertrand has never been able to forget. Everyone's knowledge of these affairs, admitted or not, is the measure of civilization for these people. Marie-Ange toys with the numbers one through six, as though seeking a pattern of sense in the world.

Lucienne Osborn, forty-two, is married to an American film producer, not present at the dinner. Her mind vapid, her body faded, she is preoccupied with thoughts of television sets, suntan, her dog Zig, and her lover, Léon-Pierre.

Jérôme Aygulf, who is twenty, finds himself out of his element. A childhood friend of Martine, he was invited only at the last moment after another guest had sent regrets. Jérôme, aspiring but naïve, is at the opposite end of the scale from Eugénie. He finds himself longing for the attention and patronage of Bertrand more than for anything else. Insecure and a little awkward in this society,

he nonetheless attracts the attention of Marie-Ange.

The Dinner Party belongs in that class of novels, including also *The Sacred Fount* and *The Counterfeiters*, in which a novelist as a character thinks interchangeably about experience and the novel. The center of interest in Mauriac's book really lies in the thoughts and comments expressed by Bertrand and Gilles about the novel form. Referring to his novel, Bertrand speaks of a new kind of fiction, one in which on some common occasion, such as the present dinner party, time and space would be suspended. And contemplating his next one, which will fuse thought and speech, Bertrand responds to Claudel's definition of the simplicity of truth along the line of Diderot's Proustian statement that "Everything we have ever known . . . exists within us without our knowing it." The book is studded with criticism of novelists and theories of the novel, ideas which reveal character but also illuminate the practice of Claude Mauriac in this particular novel. In one way or another *The Dinner Party* raises a host of interesting questions about modern fiction.

DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN OF INEQUALITY

Type of work: Political and philosophical essay

Author: Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

First published: 1754

The *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* is one of the early works in which Rousseau examines and expounds his rebellion against the social order as it exists, a revolt that the writer was to continue throughout his life. Rousseau believed that the evils which plague mankind have their origins not in sin but in man's departure from the natural state, in which man was happy and good. This is the typical Romantic view of the Noble Savage.

In his inquiry into the origins of in-

equality, Rousseau begins with man, the core and motivation of his study. He states that there are two kinds of inequality among men. One is "natural or physical" because it is created by nature and consists of the obvious physical differences. The second is what he calls "moral or political inequality," which grows out of convention and flowers because of the "consent of men." The inquiry accepts the beliefs of religion that God took man out of a state of nature by His will, but it considers also what might have become of

man had he been left to develop by himself.

The first part of the inquiry concerns itself with man in his natural state, the state of nature, the "embryo of his species." In this animal state, he was the most promising of all other animals, and was therefore the most felicitously situated. He was free from artificial worries and not given to reflection. Rousseau asserts the extreme position that man thinking is a depraved animal. Nature is benign and treats all her creatures well. It is only as man departs from the cradle of nature that he begins to degenerate both physically and morally, for he is physically and morally superior in the state of nature. Metaphysically, he is superior because he is motivated solely by instinct to desire and to fear. He cannot, therefore, be either good or bad, vicious or virtuous.

Rousseau attacks directly the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and its insistence that man is fundamentally vicious and must be controlled. Rousseau urges that Hobbes should have concluded that the state of nature affords man the greatest opportunity for self-preservation without doing injury to others and therefore should be the state in which man is least vicious, wicked, and injurious to his fellow man. Hobbes failed signally in making two key observations: one, that savages are not bad merely because they cannot know good, but rather because their passions are peaceful; two, that man is by nature compassionate because of an innate repugnance to see fellow creatures suffer, and this compassion moderates the violence of egotism.

The second part of the essay concerns itself with proving that man became wicked as he became a social animal. Society began when the first man staked out property and claimed it as his own. One of Rousseau's most powerful sentences condemns this false claim and the long string of crimes, murders, misfortunes, and general horrors that sprang from it. A savior of mankind would have been the

man who declared in ringing terms: "Be sure not to this imposter; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody." Rousseau quotes with approval John Locke's famous statement that "There can be no injury, where there is no property."

As men congregated into groups, each person began to think about the others and to consider public esteem. Each man who excelled in some particular thing—singing best, dancing best, hunting best, or the like—began to assert his excellence, and nobody could deny the rating. As superiority grew, so did another complication, morality. In savage minds morality had been simple. In more advanced societies punishments for offenses by one person against another became more numerous and severe. Increasingly, Rousseau asserts, it became clear to all men that there were advantages to appearing to be what one actually was not. From the difference between seeming and being sprang pomp and trickery, as well as all the lesser vices that go in their train.

From this situation it was not a long step to another vice, the establishment of law. Clever, powerful men, Rousseau says, seeing the advantage of joining their strength to exploit the weak, seduced the powerless into allowing themselves to be protected by the strong, when they had nothing to be protected against, for the sake of harmony among them all. Rousseau drives home his point with one of the most ringing statements in the book, anticipating in its power and direction the powerful statement which begins *Du Contrat Social*, stating that man is born free but is everywhere enslaved: "All offered their necks to the yoke in hopes of securing their liberty. . . ." The result of this flight into slavery was the eternal fixing of the laws of property and inequality. "Clever usurpation" had been converted into "unalterable right," and for the benefit of a few ambitious individuals all mankind had been reduced to perpetual labor, slavery and misery.

Political distinctions always breed civil distinctions, and the nature of man in society being what it is, men gladly submit to slavery if they are filled with the hope that they can themselves enslave others. From the great inequalities among men rise numerous evils, one of the greatest being despotism, which is bound to result in the overthrow of the despot through revolution.

Rousseau ends his discourse with a ringing declaration of the superiority of man in the state of nature over man in a state of society. The former is diametrically opposed to the latter. Man in nature is peaceful and free, wanting only to live and be free from work. Man in society is always toiling and sweating, moving, even rushing into death in order to live. Rousseau's conclusion is that all inequalities that now weigh man down result

from the development of man's faculties and working of his mind. Further, it is clear that moral inequality opposes natural right.

The essay is in general a passionate explanation of the author's belief in the ideal state of man. It purports to be, and usually is to a certain extent, an unbiased and learned examination. Rousseau slights certain areas and telescopes others, passing over them with a brief word of what he could prove had he the time or inclination to present evidence; however, these passages do not invalidate or even weaken the argument in general.

Stylistically, the essay is often weak because the arguments are not tightly organized and presented. Though impassioned, it does not have the power of Rousseau's later works, especially *Du Contrat Social* or the *Confessions*.

DISCOURSES

Type of work: Dialogues

Author: Pietro Aretino (1492-1556)

Time: Sixteenth century

Locale: Rome

First published: Part I, 1534; Part II, 1536

Principal characters:

NANNA, a courtesan

ANTONIA, her friend

PIPPA, Nanna's daughter

Pietro Aretino won his reputation as "the Scourge of Princes" with his sharp, scurrilous attacks on the important men of his time; he is best known as a writer for his vigorous, witty, often obscene plays and dialogues that show him as a realist and something of an ironist. He was deeply conscious of the moral corruption of his age, but he was for the most part content to portray it vividly without endeavoring to reform it.

The *Discourses* (*Ragionamenti*) is based on an underlying premise that sex is the overriding concern of all human beings. Aretino treats the subject with great humor and gusto. He is a gifted storyteller and an acute observer of the

mores of society, skillful at painting every detail of a lavish banquet or a lady's costume.

In this work Aretino has linked together a succession of tales, beast fables, and anecdotes with a narrative framework, using a pattern successfully employed by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio in *The Decameron*; the tone of his work is close to that of Chaucer's *fabliaux*, the tales of the miller, the reeve, the friar, and others of the bawdier pilgrims. Each of the two parts of Aretino's *Discourses* consists of three days' conversation. In Part I, Nanna takes up successively the life of the nun, the wife, and the courtesan.

Part II deals with rules for the successful prostitute, the "Betrayals of Men," and the "art" of the procuress.

On the first day Nanna, a witty, experienced courtesan, tells her friend Antonia about her entrance into a convent. Leaving grieving lovers behind, she went with fear and trembling toward what she feared was to be a grim, ascetic existence. She describes, ironically in the light of what follows, the solemn ceremony in which they divested her of her worldliness, then goes on to recount the sights that greeted her when she entered the nunnery. Pretty young nuns and handsome, merry priests feasted together in the greatest luxury, eating and drinking their fill while laughing and talking throughout the meal that was theoretically governed by the rule of silence. The banquet concluded with what can only be described as an orgy, while Nanna and a companion went strolling down the hall, entertaining themselves by spying through cracks in the wall on the grotesque amours of the older nuns. Aretino spares no details to make the scene as corrupt and disgusting as possible.

To enlighten Antonia about the deceptions commonly practiced by wives, Nanna tells several tales, all calculated to reveal the cleverness of women. In the first a doctor's wife, renowned throughout her village for her ostentatious piety, pays frequent visits to a hermit, who "stole time for his devotions" from tending his elaborate garden. The "holy couple" was discovered in bed by a villager, who promptly summoned his friends and the parish priest to see the sight. The hermit, awakened by the commotion, was unperturbed. Everyone knows, he explained, that holy men sin only when they are possessed by demons; he could not be blamed for his actions. Taking her cue from him, the doctor's wife immediately feigned madness, recovering her senses only after she had three times touched the holiest relics in the church, the two knuckle bones of the holy innocents.

Heavy irony pervades Nanna's second tale of unfaithful wives. The "heroine" is described in lyric terms. She seems to float in the air when she walks, and she genuflects with such grace that "it seemed it must be the way they did it in paradise." This paragon of virtue is desperately anxious to escape the close surveillance of her elderly husband, "called the Count from some worthless old castle or other with two chimneys and a crumbling moat." She pretends to walk in her sleep, sure that her husband will follow her, and causes him to fall and break his leg. Bedridden, he hires ten stalwart young men to guard his wife for him, and she, having accomplished what she wanted, "sleepwalks" nightly with these guards.

Nanna's description of the courtesan's life is filled with similar stories. She tells Antonia how she deceived her various lovers and filled her purse in the process. Each of her stories indicates that avarice and not lust is the dominating force in this kind of life.

At the end of the third day Antonia, considering all that Nanna has told her, advises her to make her daughter Pippa a prostitute, for it seems the most honest life of the three. Both the nun and the wife betray sacred vows, while the whore, like the soldier, "is paid for doing wrong, and doing it, she is not to be held for so doing, because that is what her shop has to sell." Her life is a luxurious one, and a little penitence at the end will clear her of her sins.

The second part of the *Discourses* is briefer and more disconnected than the first; it seems to have been written to capitalize on the popularity of its predecessor. The first day's discussion begins as Pippa pouts and begs her mother to make her a courtesan, as her godmother Antonia has advised. Nanna agrees and gives her daughter a few basic rules of the profession. In dealing with Spaniards, who carry on their courtships with flowery language and much hand kissing, return bow for bow and kiss for kiss, but get rid

of them as quickly as possible. A Frenchman, on the other hand, should be welcomed at once, for in making love to him, one can steal the shirt from his back. Nanna reserves her greatest praise for the men of Venice, where Aretino made his home for the latter part of his life; they are generous and kind—ideal lovers, in fact.

Nanna recounts several anecdotes in the same vein as the stories told on the third day of the first group of dialogues: accounts of elaborate schemes for fleecing unsuspecting customers. She deceived one violent-tempered suitor with an elaborate plot, provoking him to strike her, then hiring a friend to paint a hideous scar on her face. Hoping to avoid arrest for assaulting her, her lover sent lavish gifts, money, and doctors to attend her. He made a settlement of five hundred ducats and paid more to have the scar "healed" by another swindler. Nanna finally restored him to her favors in return for the promise of a new dress.

Perhaps the most famous passage in the *Discourses* is the description of the sack of Rome by the Germans, described by Nanna as an example of the "Betrayals of Men." Aretino displays great scorn for the Romans who, hearing of the invaders, decked themselves in their finest uniforms, then fled in panic. There is a vivid description of the horrors of the night when no church, no home, no hospital offered sanctuary from the enemy. "The

pity was to hear husbands, red with the blood which streamed from their wounds, calling for their lost wives in a voice that would have made the solid block of the Coliseum weep."

A stark description of the rape of a young prostitute by thirty-one stablemen reinforces Nanna's comments on men. A lighter tale, the account of the deception of a silly young wife by a poet she had been pursuing, concludes the second day's conversation.

Nanna and Pippa listen to a godmother and a nurse as they comment upon the superiority of the procuress to the prostitute, the subject of the final dialogue. The godmother tells them how she once lured strangers to the homes of young courtesans, where they were robbed of their cloaks as well as of their cash. She also boasts of her part in the elopement of a young wife, whose elderly husband was duped into admitting her lover into their home to cure his toothache.

Although Aretino's *Discourses* is not great literature, it is entertaining in much the same way that the Elizabethan comedies about clever rogues are. The author, giving a lively picture of the seamier side of life in his time, writes in a style that, applied to more significant topics, might have given him a much higher place among Renaissance men of letters than he now holds.

DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

Type of work: Novel

Author: Boris Pasternak (1890-1960)

Time: 1903-1943

Locale: Moscow, the Eastern Front, Siberia

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

YURI ANDREIEVICH ZHIVAGO, physician, poet, and a man of good will

EVGRAF ANDREIEVICH ZHIVAGO, his half brother

NIKOLAI NIKOLAIEVICH VEDENIAPIN (UNCLE KOLIA), his maternal uncle

ANTONINA ALEXANDROVNA GROMKA (TONIA), his wife

LARISA FEODOROVNA GUISHAR (LARA), wife of Pavel Antipov

PAVEL PAVLOVICH ANTIPOV (PASHA), a Red commissar

INNOKENTII DUDOROV (NIKA), the son of a revolutionary terrorist
MISHA GORDON, the son of a Jewish lawyer and a friend of Yurii
Zhivago
VICTOR IPPOLITOVICH KOMAROVSKY, a shady lawyer, seducer of Lara
LIBERIUS AVERKIEVICH MIKULITSYN, a Red partisan leader
TANIA, the daughter of Yurii Zhivago and Lara

It is unfortunate that the furor over *Doctor Zhivago* should have swept Boris Pasternak's novel so quickly into the realm of front-page news, an area of journalistic expediency in which the intense moral vision of experience functions awkwardly at best. For the true work of art never stands for this or that; it simply exists, separate and complete and self-contained, and it makes no compromises with the world of things as they are. This is one reason why the book, inevitably seized upon as a club with which to bludgeon the ideology and bureaucracy of the Kremlin, should have turned out to be a two-edged weapon, as much a reproach to certain attitudes of democratic complacency as it is an indictment of the totalitarian state. Understandably, Pasternak's literary position became embarrassing abroad as well as difficult at home, for the very simple reason that much of the acclaim which greeted his novel outside Russia was based on misunderstanding of his purpose. Pasternak was a poet-novelist, not a political pamphleteer. As a propaganda tool of the cold war, his sprawling, uneven novel lacks the single-minded concentration and drive of the inspired polemic. It is superb, however, as a statement of human dignity and of man's capacity for integrity, faith, courage, and endurance; and it is as a work in the great moral tradition of Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoevski that it must be judged.

The remarkable thing is that nothing in the external circumstances of Pasternak's career had prepared readers outside the Iron Curtain for the explosion his novel touched off. Son of Leonid Pasternak, the bourgeois painter who illustrated Tolstoy's novels, and Rosa Kaufman Pasternak, a concert pianist, he grew up in

the cultured atmosphere of the pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia, studied music under Scriabin and philosophy in Germany, and published his first book of poems at twenty-three. With Esenin and Mayakovsky he emerged as one of the three leading poets of the early Soviet regime. To him, as to many of his generation, it may have seemed that the events of 1917 held the promise of the future. If so, the dream of freedom soon faded. Esenin and Mayakovsky died by their own hands during the decade of civil war, mass violence, and terror which followed. Pasternak survived the persecutions and purges by preserving a discreet public silence. Except for translations of some of his early poems and sketches, he was known to the Western world, if at all, as a poet who no longer wrote verse, a translator of Shakespeare and Goethe.

Perhaps Pasternak's years of silence were also a season of pondering and preparation. *Doctor Zhivago* contains a revealing passage in which Yurii Zhivago dreams of writing a prose work on a vast scale, a book of impressions of all he had seen and thought about; his poems are a preparation for this major task. He did not live to create his grand project, but this book is undoubtedly Pasternak's, a novel powerfully imagined, deeply concerned with the moral issues of human conduct, and set against the background of a world falling apart and, through loneliness and cruelty and fear, involving a whole society in the common destruction.

The opening chapters give an impression of complexity and spaciousness. In the leisurely fashion of the full-bodied nineteenth century novel, Pasternak sets his stage, introduces his people, and draws the threads of his story together.

Ten-year-old Yurii Zhivago, the son of a wealthy profligate who has deserted his family, attends his mother's funeral in the company of his Uncle Kolia; they stay that night at a nearby monastery and to the boy, waking in the darkness, the snow-covered landscape beyond his window suggests an empty, alien world. Young Misha Gordon, traveling with his father, sees the older Zhivago kill himself in a leap from a moving train. Nika Dudorov, whose parents were a nihilistic terrorist and a Georgian princess, is being brought up in the household of Kilogrigov, a philanthropic industrialist. After his father, a revolutionary and a railway worker, has been exiled to Siberia, Pasha Antipov is taken in by the Tiverzin family, also revolutionaries. Amalia Guishar, the French widow of a Russian engineer, arrives in Moscow and opens a dressmaking establishment; her protector is Victor Komarovsky, an unscrupulous lawyer who eventually succeeds in seducing her daughter Lara.

Before long these lives begin to criss-cross. During their schooldays Yurii Zhivago and Misha Gordon live in the home of Alexander Gromeko, a professor of chemistry; their companion is Tonia, daughter of Gromeko and his ailing wife, Anna Ivanovna. Pasha and Nika take part in student riots. One night, by chance, after Madame Guishar has attempted suicide, Yurii sees Lara looking at her betrayer and guesses their secret. Lara, following an unsuccessful attempt to shoot Komarovsky, becomes a governess in the Kilogrigov household; later she marries Pasha and goes to live with him in a hamlet beyond the Urals. Yurii discovers his vocation as a poet but instead chooses a career in medicine because he believes that art is not a vocation, any more than melancholy or cheerfulness is a profession. For him most choices are as simple as that. During his student years he reveals an almost Dostoevskian gift of innocence which he never loses and which makes him vulnerable, in the end, to forces beyond his power to order

or control. This trait is part of the greater, enveloping *mystique* which in the novel throws over much that is brutal and sordid a radiance of goodness and truth, symbolized by the light seen briefly in a strange house as Yurii and Tonia drive by to a Christmas party. Later he writes a poem about that light in the window, and at the end he dies in the same house. He marries Tonia and their first child is born shortly before World War I.

The novel's early promise of Tolstoyan richness and profusion in character and scene is never fulfilled, for with the outbreak of the war the tempo of events quickens abruptly. Yurii Zhivago serves in a hospital unit at the front. Wounded, he is nursed by Lara Antipova, who is to become the great love of his life. So he finds himself married to a wife whom he sincerely respects and loves, but at the same time pulled toward Lara by a tide of passion which sweeps him along into the unsettled years ahead. The Moscow to which he returns after the October Revolution is a city ravaged by riots and disease, from which he flees with his family to an estate, the property of Tonia's grandfather, in the Urals. The account of this journey across Russia in winter is one of the great set pieces of the novel; all Russia is on the move, restless, threatening, violent. In the village where the Zhivagos settle Yurii meets Lara again and is once more drawn to her until he is seized by a band of Red partisans and forced into service as their doctor during a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Whites in Siberia. After his escape he returns to find that his family has gone back to Moscow. He and Lara live together in an abandoned farmhouse for a brief period of perfect happiness. Then, about to be arrested because they have become politically suspect, he sends her to safety with Komarovsky, who has become an official of the new regime. Another great scene of the novel is that in which Zhivago encounters Pasha for the last time. Pasha, now called Strelnikov—

"The Shooter"—has been a feared and hated commissar of the civil war, but he himself is in flight from Red authorities who have denounced him as he has denounced others. His suicide after a night of wild accusation and abject confession points eloquently to the revolutionary madness of the period.

Back in Moscow, Zhivago finds his life empty and meaningless. His family has found refuge in Paris. He marries a younger woman, the daughter of a former porter in the Gromeko house, practices medicine, and writes a few scientific papers. In the end he is befriended by his strange half brother Evgraf, an ambiguous figure whose relationship with Yuri Zhivago remains shadowy and symbolic. After the doctor dies of a heart attack, Evgraf arranges for the publication of a collection of Yuri's poems, some of which make up the last chapter of the novel. During World War II he also discovers Tania, the daughter of Yuri and Lara, and provides for her future.

The twenty-four poems printed at the end of the novel are not a mere appendage, as unwary readers have supposed, but an integral part of Pasternak's examination into the nature of life and death; they complete the pattern of meaning by a final statement on the themes of love, death, and resurrection. Pasternak's technique throughout reveals the working of a poet's imagination and a poet's strategy with imagery and symbol, rather than the logic of the novelist—one reason, perhaps, why the book conveys an effect of subtlety and richness. It is a novel filled with luminous, compelling images of the land itself in all weathers and seasons, so that the life of man remains rooted in the life of nature, not in systems or institutions. If this method results at times in awkwardness of structure, it gains nevertheless in perspective and insight. The mystery of personality is revealed but not explained away. And life, says Yuri Zhivago, is stronger than men's efforts to control it to their own ends. For

him it is the principle of self-renewal.

Good as the novel is in its great sense of life and in tracing through the particular incidents of particular lives the special terror which is history's contribution to our century, it gains added vigor from its deep roots in the Christian tradition. The purity of Pasternak's religious feeling, uncomplicated by sect or dogma, is without the self-consciousness most Western writers display in dealing with matters of religion; the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are in his view part of an ever-renewing miracle. Early in the novel Uncle Kolia, who acts as one of his spokesmen, relates the condition of man to the march of history and the Passion of Christ. His argument is that history is the centuries-old record of man's attempt to explore the riddle of death and to overcome it. All scientific discoveries and creation in art, he says, are spiritual, based on the two ideas of modern man, the idea of freedom of spirit and the idea of sacrifice. This theme is magnificently restated in "Garden of Gethsemane," the closing poem of the novel, eloquent in its promise of a risen Christ and its imagery of the centuries coming like a caravan out of darkness for judgment.

Doctor Zhivago is a novel of honesty and passion, not a work of abstraction set within a frame of historical reference. At the same time it is not a fiction of profound psychological depth such as we have had from the great visionaries and the midnight-haunted writers of the past, nor a massive fable in the manner of Melville or Dostoevski. Its meaning and relevance are of a different order. Boris Pasternak has looked at the history of his own time with what Henry James called the "imagination of disaster." Out of poetic apprehension and the knowledge so gained he has spoken to the conscience of the world. And the world has listened to his testimony concerning the moral condition of modern man in the sweep of history. That is the important thing.

DOSTOEVSKY

Type of work: Critical study
Author: Nicholas Berdyaev (1874-1948)
First published: 1934

Nicholas Berdyaev, one of the foremost religious thinkers of modern Russia, pays homage in *Mirosozertzanie Dostoievskago* (original English title: *The World-Outlook of Dostoevsky*) to the major influence upon his unique interpretation of Jesus Christ and the role of Christianity in the twentieth century. While his critical study throws considerable light on Dostoevsky's philosophy, it admittedly reveals Berdyaev's own religious and ethical concerns to such an extent that critic and subject are inseparable. In the first part of his analysis Berdyaev, beginning with a portrait of the Russian mind, discusses Dostoevsky's conceptions of man, freedom, evil, and love. In the second, he turns more to the implications of these conceptions in terms of modern Russia, politics, and especially their most complete statement, *The Grand Inquisitor*, the famous chapter from *The Brothers Karamazov*. Altogether, the critical study provides a significant key for the understanding of Berdyaev's remarkable intellectual career as well as for Dostoevsky's works.

Asserting that he thinks Dostoevsky Russia's greatest metaphysician, Berdyaev wants to unfold the dynamic ideas that he calls Dostoevsky's *conception of the world*. The Russian mind, he claims as a basis of his study, is an antagonistic dualism, in which the natural tendency is to seek such extremes that the individual is sharply torn by mutually exclusive positions. The "nihilists" avidly seek anarchy, atheism, and self-destruction; the "apocalypists" want only the most excessive ascetism and a messianic revival. These two sides of the Russian spirit are more fully expressed in Dostoevsky's fiction than in any other philosophy or literature; they create the passion that makes his novels so disturbing. This passion is

the tragic view of human destiny, a view that he was able to communicate because he fully expressed the dualism that he found in himself and also because he saw life in depth, never on the surface. By holding the dualism that he found in himself and also because he saw life in depth, never on the surface, and by keeping the dualism always in its greatest tension, he created the true human spirit as it faces tragedy, undergoes purification through suffering, and finds release in Christ.

Although opposed to Humanism, Dostoevsky's absorbing theme was man and man's destiny; this theme was developed in such an intense manner that the inability of Humanism to solve the tragedy of human destiny is completely undermined. All of his novels are built around a single character who is the center of a whirlpool of passions that drive him away from a social framework; once the character completely alienates himself, he believes that he is emancipated from law and from God. But this "freedom" is the condition through which Dostoevsky plunges into the inner depths of man. According to the Humanistic view of the modern world, this alienated character should be free, but Dostoevsky shows that his freedom is really a descent into Hell, for the character develops an unhealthy self-love that makes him introspective and consequently miserable. Human nature, being extreme, antinomian, and irrational, is overwhelmingly attracted toward lawless freedom, and this lawlessness can end only in the deification of man or the discovery of God. In other words, freedom is a test that leads either to misery or to release; it is the essential condition of tragic suffering.

The justification both of God and of man rests in human freedom; thus, all of

Dostoevsky's novels are concerned with the experiment of human liberty. Freedom is an amoral, valueless state out of which the dignity or debasement of man grows, but freedom, being amoral, implies the freedom of evil and the freedom of good, either of which will destroy the other. Thus freedom is essentially tragic, for once it is found, it presents the free man with choices that are beyond his power. Since freedom implies such a choice, Berdyaev believes that it is by nature Christian and that the figure of Christ presents itself as the ultimate and final freedom. The experience of complete freedom, embracing both good and evil, can lead to God, but more often it ends in self-will that cancels freedom by negating God and becoming trapped in compulsion. In fact, the usual mind advocates a freedom that negates evil, and without evil there would be no need for God because the world itself would be divine.

Wherever there is freedom, there must be evil; to reject freedom on the basis that it can bring evil is to make the evil twice as bad. Thus, while freedom can degenerate into evil, goodness cannot exist without it. Dostoevsky here saw clearly into the depths of human nature: evil rests in the depths of man's own personality—it is the sign of his inner profundity and the key to true personality, not a condition caused by society. In other words, evil is the inevitable tragic road that a man must travel before he can discover himself or God; the truly free man learns that evil will defeat and destroy itself and that through this purgation he can rise to spiritual adulthood. Thus, evil is an essential step in the spiritual process: Dostoevsky's heroes go through freedom and evil to redemption. In the state of freedom, the hero believes that everything is allowable; however, he becomes obsessed by some fixed idea, and with this obsession freedom becomes tyranny. He appears to be a maniac. But all things are not allowable, because men, having been created in the image of God,

have an absolute value that the hero cannot violate without violating himself and becoming a slave. Yet if man were not completely free, he could do anything and be responsible for nothing; thus the state of freedom turns the hero into a divided man, able to become either a devil or a saint.

In Dostoevsky's treatment of love, Berdyaev sees the full depth of the novelist's profundity. Love is a Dionysian force that literally tears the individual to pieces. Woman is the dark principle that draws man toward a tragic sensuality or an equally tragic pity; there is no unity or perfection in his treatment of love. Instead it is a power that infects and destroys. Yet the blame rests entirely with the man; he is powerless before the female; she brings out the tragic separation of his own nature. In sexual as well as in social love, man's inner nature yearns for an excess that enslaves him; even pity takes on a violence that is self-destructive. The only kind of love that remains real is Christian love, an affirmation of eternity; all other love is an illusion and a lie.

Having outlined Dostoevsky's conception of human destiny, Berdyaev turns to the larger issues that grow out of this central vision; these issues—revolution, socialism, and modern Russia—place the heroes' struggles in significant frameworks that shape and are shaped by them. Of all of the Russian novelists, Dostoevsky saw clearest that revolution was inevitable; the very nature of the Russian mind dictated the excessive cry for freedom that led to socialism. Socialism, however, wants to displace God and fills itself with messianic spirit; it attempts to create a utopianism that denies evil and hence God. Thus freedom leads to slavery; man loses freedom by asking for too much lawlessness and comes under an unhuman force. In fact, Dostoevsky saw that the only way to end the conditions of nineteenth century Russia was through the Church—to find the freedom of brotherhood in Christ. But

before that era, the Russian people must tread the path of evil, of humiliation and despair, that will purge them of their utopianism and allow a national redemption.

In *The Grand Inquisitor*, Berdyaev finds Dostoevsky's greatest statement of his religious views—the untangling of the problem of human freedom. Only two choices are available to man, the alternative of Jesus Christ or that of the Inquisitor; there is no third. Christ, who is silent throughout most of the chapter, offers the true freedom of the spirit; the Inquisitor confronts Him with compulsion, recognizing that people cannot bear the freedom offered by Christ. In one sense, the Inquisitor denies God in the name of man, but he also denies man be-

cause he believes that man can be happy only as a slave. What he overlooks is that Christ can be seen only through a free act of faith. Thus the deification of man ends in hopeless misery; Christ offers to the few a love that lifts man from self-destruction, but the freedom of Christ comes only through the renunciation of all claims to earthly power.

In portraying Dostoevsky's philosophy, Berdyaev thus shows that the novelist created a violent and contradictory world in order to describe what he regards as the basic Christian message. The movement through freedom and evil to redemption is to Berdyaev the fundamental theme of Dostoevsky's works and the philosophy that makes him great.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES AND LYRICS OF BROWNING

Author: Robert Browning (1812-1889)

First published: *Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842; *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, 1845; *Men and Women*, 1855

Much of Browning's finest writing was done during his thirties, years which comprise most of the poems in the volumes *Dramatic Lyrics*, *Dramatic Lyrics and Romances*, and *Men and Women*. The intentions and procedures of these three volumes are similar, so that most often one's comments on the first two hold good for the third as well. In fact, Browning himself in a later collected edition reshuffled many of these poems, breaking down the divisions between individual books but preserving always the dominating premise that the poems should be, as he said, "though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine." During his middle years we see Browning striving to write poems at once less sentimental and more objective than those of his early hero, Shelley: he develops his own form of the dramatic monologue in the attempt to overcome subjectivity and vagueness, and his success here is in the nature of an

overcompensation. The poems in these volumes, "always Dramatic in principle," are brilliant but somehow chilly.

Browning's verse-play, *Pippa Passes*, published in 1841, immediately precedes *Dramatic Lyrics* and by its superb rendering of the spirit of Italy—a country which is for Browning always the dialectical counterpart of England, a kind of anti-England—the play foreshadows the skeptical attitude conveyed by the poems. In "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," in "My Last Duchess," and in the immense narrative poem *The Ring and the Book* the poet was later to draw implicit and explicit contrasts between contemporary England and Renaissance Italy. His habitual approach is in this way argumentative and skeptical, the counterbalancing of opposing countries, times, sexes, and beliefs which is suggested even by many of the titles in these volumes: "Meeting at Night" against "Parting at Morning," "Love in a Life" against "Life in a Love,"

"The Italian in England" against "The Englishman in Italy." The method permits Browning to end an elegant dialogue between two Venetian lovers, "In a Gondola," with a vicious stabbing. Alternately, he can present the interior monologue of a warped person, allowing the character to condemn himself by his (or her) words: as is the case of the female poisoner, crossed in love, in "The Laboratory," or the deranged murderer who speaks in "Porphyria's Lover." Perhaps the best of these interior monologues is the "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," in which a splenetic monk grumbles against his abbot:

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhor-
rence!
Water your damn flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trim-
ming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

The lines are characteristic: not only does the voice contradict the speaker's appearance and vocation, but the very exclamations and dashes render the punctuation histrionic and serve to define a particular habit of mind.

The monologues which imply a listener are psychologically more complex. "My Last Duchess" and "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," appeared in 1842 and 1845, respectively, and are models, in these earlier volumes, of the kind of irony and immediacy which the dramatic method at its best is capable of generating:

That's my last Duchess painted on
the wall,
Looking as if she were alive, I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pan-
dolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she
stands.

Browning consciously follows Donne in beginning poems with arresting first

lines. Here, much of the Duke's ruthlessness is conveyed at the very outset by his exquisitely casual reference, with the possessive "my", to his dead wife, by his evident pleasure at being able now to consider her as an art object, not as an intractable life-study:

She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon
made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked what-
e'er
She looked on, and her looks went
everywhere.

Subtly, Browning manages to turn the Duke's criticism of his former wife, his specious yet elegantly phrased "how shall I say?" claim that she was too much alive, too indiscriminately joyous, into an exposure of his own monstrous pride in "a nine-hundred-years-old name." Flexible couplets with unobtrusive rhymes are the fit medium for his self-justifying logic and for the vicious sweetness which informs even his dealings with his present auditor, the envoy of the woman who will probably be Ferrara's next Duchess ("Will't please you rise?" addressed to the envoy is a command in the guise of a question). By tracing a logic of association in the blank verse of "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," Browning focuses in a similar way on an incident of crucial importance for the self-revelation of his title character, the delirious churchman whose dying words concern pagan luxury and wordly pomp rather than Christian salvation.

Two dramatic monologues from the *Men and Women* volume, "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "How it Strikes a Contemporary," are explicitly concerned with aesthetics and the process of composition in poetry and painting. If we read between the lines of these poems, looking for the passages which most accord with Browning's actual practice, it is clear that he believes the best art is a universalizing of individual experience; and that to this end the poet or painter must be first of all

curious, pre-eminently a noticer. Indeed, the verbs "notice," "mark," "see" are common in Browning's dramatic lyrics, where to notice a unique scene or situation is to exert an individual consciousness, and where to notice intensely is the first step in separating the apparent from the real and in beginning to write, a book that in words from *The Ring and the Book*, "shall mean beyond the facts." Accordingly, a collection of "so many utterances of so many imaginary persons" would escape the charge of subjectivity, yet taken as a whole it would convey a meaning beyond the mathematical sum of the dramatic lyric voices involved. These speakers reveal themselves far beyond what the occasion warrants, and the poems are essentially more dramatic and romantic than lyric. Browning takes definite pleasure in the vivid selfhood of his speakers, and pleasure as well in the multiple vision of the artist who can create and embody conflicting viewpoints while remaining himself uncommitted.

Browning's interest in conflict, incongruity, even in the grotesque, has its natural complement in his dramatic technique. The range of styles and effects is as various as the range of complexity among his characters. "An Englishman in Italy" exhibits a cataloguing, descriptive style, for instance in the request that one observe a fishing skiff from Amalfi, with alien English eyes watching

. . . Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and gray jellies, your sea-
fruit;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all
manner
Of horns and lumps. . . .

In "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," and in "Incident of the French Camp," Browning manages well two very different kinds of narrative. The mode of "Pictor Ignotus," an early monologue which looks ahead to "Andrea Del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi," is one of ratiocination, fol-

lowing a proud artist's ebb and flux of thought:

O human faces, hath it split, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not
saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed
(how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,
—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bos-
oms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West,
South or North. . . .

There is also the lyric outcry of "Home-Thoughts, From Abroad," with its famous lines, "Oh, to be in England/Now that April's there." Browning's metrical range is diverse and experimental as well; in "Boot and Saddle" and "How They Brought the Good News From Ghent to Aix" he brilliantly turns the difficult anapestic meter to his own purposes, for both poems succeed in conveying by a kind of metrical imitation the excitement of a fast ride on a horse ("I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three"). Finally, it accords well with Browning's perspectivism, his prizing of unique objects and irreducible selfhood, that he should have created a new metrical or stanzaic form for almost every separate poem.

These earlier poems are a true representation of Browning in that they show him to be intellectually ingenious but no philosopher; an experimenter with both social and literary norms but by no standard a Victorian radical; a writer aware of evil and violence, but for the most part a cautious optimist. The later poems and *The Ring and the Book* bear out one's sense that his major achievement is in fact in these dramatic poems of his middle years, where the view of truth as relative is first impressively demonstrated in dramatic monologues. There is, of course, something deeply subversive in the notion that different points of view are equally valid, in the oblique yet damaging criticisms of Victorian sexual and religious conventions conveyed in some of these

poems, in the attacks on bureaucracy such as the telling poem written against the "official" Wordsworth, "The Lost Leader." The dramatic monologue, at once objective and subjective, public and private in its methods, was the main vehicle used by Browning for criticism of Victorian society and manners; the monologue permitted ethical pronouncements to be made through someone else's voice, as it were, ventriloquially.

Thus in "My Last Duchess," in "Bishop Blougram's Apology," in many of his best poems Browning is a public writer with disturbing private tendencies: he never pushes exposure or criticism past the point of pleasure, and his work as a

whole gives an effect of hard impersonal brilliance. Browning was typically a man of his age in believing that the poet was a moral agent in his society, a "Maker-see" whose concerns were norms and value, the discovery and presentation of a heightened reality. Yet in wishing to write poems which would mean "beyond the facts" he settled on a method which from the start excluded personal directness. Because all his sincerities and critiques had to be conveyed indirectly, these poems for all their peculiar triumphs will be found to lack the keynote of passionate personal despair which is the most profound theme in the finest Victorian poetry.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Robert Browning (1812-1889)

First published: 1864

When Robert Browning published *Dramatis Personae* he was just beginning to gain a measure of general esteem, both in the eyes of the public and of the critics. The year before its publication a three-volume collection of his earlier works had sold moderately well. *Dramatis Personae* added considerably to his popularity, and a second edition was called for before 1864 was out. It is ironic that this volume, the first that can be said to have achieved popular success, contained the first clear signs of the decline of his poetic powers.

It was his first volume of new poems since *Men and Women*, published in 1855. In the interval the pattern of Browning's life had undergone complete transformation. On June 29, 1861, his wife had died. They had made their home in Italy; after her death, Browning returned to England. For years he had been virtually out of touch with the currents of English thought. Now he plunged into a society that was perplexed by what it had learned and troubled by what it had come to doubt. Browning was

soon personally involved in the intellectual and religious controversies of the day.

The changes in his life produced changes in his poetry. His love poems, understandably, became more melancholy. Many of the poems in *Men and Women* had had historical settings; all but a few of those in *Dramatis Personae* have contemporary settings. Even when he gives his version of an old tale, as in "Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic," he manages to work in discussion of nineteenth century problems. In general, he was becoming more argumentative, more of a preacher. He still preferred the dramatic mode of utterance but the voice of the poet is often heard behind the dramatic mask.

Two of the important themes in the volume are love and death, frequently juxtaposed. The death of Mrs. Browning may have been an influence on his choice of subjects, but it should not be overestimated; a number of the poems antedate her death. "Prospice," however, written in the fall of 1861, is clearly Browning

speaking in his own voice. It is an open affirmation of belief in immortality. When death ends his life, he says, as it has ended hers,

O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp
thee again,
And with God be the rest!

In "Too Late" another man grieves over a dead woman, but with a difference. He had never expressed his love for her and now suffers not grief alone but regret at having missed his opportunity. It is a familiar theme in Browning, love unfulfilled through negligence, expressed earlier in "The Statue and the Bust," and, elsewhere in *Dramatis Personae*, in "Youth and Art," and in "Dis Aliter Visum; or Le Byron de Nos Jours." If "Too Late" has an autobiographical element it is of an inverse order: Browning, unlike the speaker, had not missed his opportunity for love. The speaker of "Too Late" says it would have been better to

. . . have burst like a thief
And borne you away to a rock for us
two
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody,
and brief,
Then changed to myself again

Browning, a sedentary man, had stepped out of character once in his life, when he had spirited a middle-aged poetess off to Italy.

Two of the finest poems in *Dramatis Personae*, also love poems, are "Confessions" and "James Lee's Wife" (originally called, misleadingly, "James Lee"). One reason why they are perennially satisfying is that, unlike many poems in the volume, they are free from topical controversy. In "Confessions," one of Browning's shortest dramatic monologues, a dying man recalls, with satisfaction, a love affair of long ago:

How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

In "James Lee's Wife," as in Tennyson's "Maud," the story is that of the death of

love. It is a restrained, dignified cry of heartbreak, a skillfully wrought dramatic lyric, the desolate scene and the dying year serving as mute echoes of the speaker's mood.

Of the eighteen poems originally grouped in *Dramatis Personae* (two occasional pieces were later added: "Deaf and Dumb" and "Eurydice to Orpheus"), few are not cluttered with argument. Of these, none besides "James Lee's Wife" and "Confessions" is particularly memorable. "The Worst of It" is mawkish; "May and Death" is pleasant, but slight; "A Face" and "A Likeness" are insignificant. It should not be assumed, however, that the remaining poems, those which do serve as vehicles for Browning's beliefs, can all be dismissed as inferior poems.

"Caliban upon Setebos," for example, is not only a statement of Victorian religious belief; it is as well one of Browning's successful poems of the grotesque. But the controversial element is certainly there, as indicated by the subtitle: "Natural Theology in the Island." Browning is satirizing those who, relying too closely on their own resources, posit God in their own image. And Caliban is not merely a figure taken from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; he is also a post-Darwinian figure, a poet's version of the evolutionary "missing link." The topical references in the poem do not, however, prevent it from being rated one of Browning's best dramatic monologues.

"A Death in the Desert," another dramatic monologue, is perhaps more seriously marred by its attempts to promote certain religious ideas. Proponents of the "higher criticism" of the Bible—Strauss in *Leben Jesu* and *New Life of Jesus*, Renan in *La Vie de Jésus*—had attempted, among other things, to prove that the Gospel of St. John had not been written, as had been assumed, by the beloved disciple. Browning's poem, an imaginative re-creation of John's death, is an argument for the authenticity of the Gospel. It contains a number of Brown-

ing's religious positions (e.g., a theory about miracles). The fact that it is the dying Apostle who gives expression to these ideas is anachronistic: many of them are clearly indigenous to the middle of the nineteenth century. As a result, the dramatic effect of the poem is appreciably undercut.

The longest poem in *Dramatis Personae*, "Mr. Sludge, 'The Medium,'" its 1525 lines comprising three-eighths of the entire volume, is more successful. It is one of Browning's liveliest character studies, not unworthy of comparison with the great dramatic monologues in *Men and Women*. But it too is tinged by Browning's growing fondness for argument. Browning satirizes spiritualism, quite a fad in the mid-nineteenth century England, by portraying a fraudulent medium whose character is based on an American, Daniel Dunglass Home, whom Browning had met. Moreover, Mr. Sludge, the speaker, gives voice, although inconsistently, to some of Browning's characteristic religious ideas. The propagandizing is done rather subtly, however, and does not strike the reader as being obtrusive.

"Rabbi Ben Ezra" and "Abt Vogler" are similar to "Mr. Sludge" in being good poems as well as statements of opinion with regard to contemporary questions. The first eight sections of "Abt Vogler" are a brilliant tour de force, a lyrical evocation of the exalted spirit of a musician improvising at the keyboard of an organ. The last four sections are not quite so successful, being too flat an exposition of one of Browning's pet theories, the "philosophy of the imperfect":

On the earth the broken arcs; in the
heaven, a perfect round.

And what is our failure here but a
triumph's evidence

For the fullness of the days?

But the argumentative element does not predominate; sound and sense are not at odds but in harmony with each other. It was one of Browning's favorites, among

his own poems, and it has since been one of the favorites of his readers.

"Rabbi Ben Ezra," another of Browning's most popular poems, is perhaps somewhat less successful than "Abt Vogler." It is unsurpassed, however, as an expression of Browning's own belief in God. Some have suggested that he intended it to be an answer to the hedonism of Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, but if this is true it is less than obvious in the poem itself. The ideas contained in it are typical of Browning. He says, for example:

What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me. . . .

We are reminded of Andrea del Sarto's dictum in *Men and Women*: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." Above all, "Rabbi Ben Ezra" is a cogent presentation of Browning's famous and frequently, if too facilely, maligned optimism.

"Gold Hair: A Story of Pornic" is a curious and troubling poem. The body of it relates an old story about the death of a young girl. She had been regarded virtually as a saint; years after her death, however, it is learned that she had been interested in earthly treasure far more than in a heavenly one. Some have objected to the story itself but that, though macabre and a bit cynical, is really unobjectionable. What ruins the poem are the last three stanzas Browning has tacked on:

Why I deliver this horrible verse?

As the text of a sermon, which now
I preach:

Evil or good may be better or worse

In the human heart, but the mixture
of each

Is a marvel and a curse.

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false,
I find;

For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,

See reasons and reasons; this, to
begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank
her dart
At the head of a lie—taught Original
Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

Browning makes no bones about his intention to preach, and the value of his stories begins to decline as they become more and more pointedly the texts for sermons.

"Apparent Failure," a lesser poem, again finds Browning speaking in his own voice. The story is merely the occasion for moral instruction; it is in Browning's own words, "the sermon's text."

The final poem in *Dramatis Personae*, "Epilogue," gives brief expression to three religious positions current when Browning wrote. The "First Speaker, as

David," sums up the High Church, ritualistic position; the "Second Speaker, as *Renan*," expressed the skepticism of one familiar with the "higher criticism." The "Third Speaker," Browning himself, answers the first two, calling ceremony unnecessary and belief tenable. Browning's belief, not unlike Tennyson's, is sustained by personal feeling rather than by a process of the reason. What is really significant about the poem is that it makes no pretense of being dramatic. It sets the pattern for the bulk of his later poems, for Browning's values have changed; controversy now means more to him than writing poems, for poetry has become the vehicle for argument. Inevitably, poetry suffers, as some of the poems in this volume and virtually all of the later poems, save *The Ring and the Book*, clearly testify.

THE EAGLE AND THE SERPENT

Type of work: Autobiographical chronicle

Author: Martín Luis Guzmán (1887-)

Time: 1913-1915

Locale: Mexico and The United States

First published: 1928

Principal characters:

THE NARRATOR

FRANCISCO VILLA, revolutionist, commander of the "Division of the North"

VENUSTIANO CARRANZA, supreme chief of the Constitutionalist army

The Mexican Revolution, perhaps the only one military movement that changed radically the position of a Latin American country after achieving its independence from Spain, affected in different ways the Mexican writers of those days. Some remained indifferent; others defended its motives and facts; a few engaged themselves actively in its vicissitudes. To no one can be attributed greater and more direct participation than that of Martín Luis Guzmán. Executor, witness, chronicler, interpreter, critic, novelist, he embraced all the possible angles of relationship with the Mexican Revolution. For this reason his work about the movement

is the closest, most objective and penetrating of all the literary productions written upon the subject.

Guzmán wrote three books—at the same time biography, history, and novel—about the Revolution: *El Aguila y la Serpiente* (*The Eagle and the Serpent*), *La Sombra del Caudillo*, and *Memorias de Pancho Villa* (*Memoirs of Pancho Villa*). Of these, the nearest to a work of the creative imagination is the first, published in fascicles in 1926 and as a book in 1928.

The reasons why Guzmán titled his book in such a way may be found in the origins of Mexican nationality. The Az-

tecs, the main indigenous ancestors of Mexico, had as a legendary core of their nomadic period the belief that they should found their capital city in a spot where they would find an eagle, devouring a serpent, perched upon a nopal. Guzmán took these images and turned them into symbols for his book, to show the bipolarity of Mexican history, in constant conflict between repentant passions and an ascension of the spirit.

There is no better source to know the genesis and spirit of this book than the speech pronounced by the author at the time of his reception as a member of the Mexican Academy of the Language. Son of his time and his country, Guzmán declared that from his earliest childhood he was accustomed to beauty from having lived in Tacubaya, one of the most charming suburbs of Mexico City, near the Chapultepec Castle, scene of many decisive moments in Mexican history, and that this same environment imposed on him a feeling for history in all its grandeur. Some years later, when he embraced the cause of the Revolution, he had at his disposal raw historical material of the first quality, out of which he took the subject for his most representative books.

For a long time Guzmán hesitated to write about the Revolution. On one side he had been the witness of ruthless crimes, usurpations, disloyalties; on another he had seen in many participants of that movement a great spirit of service, purity of intention, and patriotic goals. This knowledge finally moved him to write about the Revolution, to transform into literary values those violent deeds against the Porfirio Díaz' dictatorship. He finally decided to embody what he had seen or done. He thought that if the chief leaders of the Revolution had not been as faulty as they were, the Revolution would not have been what it became.

To understand some pages of this book, the reader must take into account the fact that the revolutionary movement

was not born from a set of ideas but erupted from instinctive forces, submitted to oppression for many centuries.

El Aguila y la Serpiente, a work which brings together literature and history, truth and fiction, is divided into two parts: "Esperanzas Revolucionarias" ("Revolutionary Hopes") and "En la Hora del Triunfo" ("At the Hour of the Triumph"). In the first part, consisting of seven books, Guzmán tells of his revolutionary adventures during the period preceding the peak of the fighting. In the second section, also of seven books, he tells of deeds that occurred during the most turbulent years of the conflict.

The book opens when Guzmán, apparently the narrator of most of the work because of its strong autobiographical structure, escapes from Victoriano Huerta's usurping government and sets sails, incognito, in flight from Veracruz to the United States, with the intention of reaching the northern Mexican states of Sonora or Coahuila and helping Venustiano Carranza in his fight against Huerta. Aboard ship, he meets four Mexicans, one of them a physician who shares his political views. They establish relations with a beautiful American woman who turns out to be a spy of the Huerta government. When this fact becomes known to Guzmán and his associates, the physician, in order to get rid of her, pretends ardent love for the lady and proposes that they marry in Havana, the next stop on the voyage. The trick fails because the ship delays her departure in that port, after landing the Mexicans and the beautiful secret agent. Again aboard ship, the revolutionaries are afraid of being imprisoned upon their arrival in New York. Then the physician feigns intent to kill the spy, but the woman does not appear at any place when they go ashore. The reader glows perplexed over the fate of the woman, but the author does not add to what has already been told.

Guzmán, unable to carry out his plan to contact Carranza, returns to Mexico City. But his enthusiasm for the Revolu-

tion causes him to embark again for Havana and later for New Orleans. After traveling to San Antonio, Texas, he meets there José Vasconcelos, a writer and the only great minister produced by the Revolution, according to Guzmán. Finally, in Ciudad Juárez, the author meets Pancho Villa, who is for him the chief hero of the Revolution. The encounter is not as dramatic as could be expected, but an intimate, deep impression about Villa will remain with the writer. Later he is introduced to Venustiano Carranza, first chief of the Constitutionalist Army; the first ideological collision with him ensues because Carranza had the viewpoint that good will is the primary virtue in leading men; Guzmán believed in technique. The author met another revolutionary leader, Alvaro Obregón, whom he considers an impostor. Gradually, Guzmán realizes that sooner or later deep disagreement will arise among the fighters. He thinks that at the very bottom everything could be reduced to the eternal dispute of the Mexicans who are always looking for power and the accomplishment of personal ambitions instead of great, disinterested aspirations.

A good number of episodes are intermingled in this part of the work. Perhaps they are the most interesting and representative material in the novel. Among them, "A Night in Culiacán," "The Murdering Spider," "A Race in the Darkness," and "The Feast of the Bullets," emerge as masterpieces of suspense and narrative vigor. This part of the work ends when the author is again in Ciudad Juárez, under the influence of Villa, after a journey to New York.

The second part of the novel deals with the triumph of the Revolution as a group, but the schism between the leaders of the movement is inevitable, chiefly

between Villa and Carranza. Guzmán joins Villa because he thinks that, in spite of the revolutionist's instinctiveness and moral blindness, he is the only possible leader who can give a democratic and impersonal character to the Revolution, in contrast with Carranza, who is too prone to oligarchy. The author arrives again at Veracruz, taken by American soldiers, and finally makes his way to Mexico City. Guzmán, exultantly, writes now the most lyric pages he has ever composed. The sight of the city and the volcanoes, the inhalation of the thin air of the plateau, the bath of clarity, the perfect adequation of person and environment, were some of the unforgettable impressions of the "rebel who returned," as Guzmán calls himself. He goes again to Chihuahua, meets Villa anew, and gets the impression that the legendary warrior could never exist if there were not a gun in the world. Villa and his pistol were a single thing; from his gun all his friendships and enmities were born. To combat now against Carranza, the writer goes to Mexico City again. For him Carranzaism is synonymous with ambition, lack of ideals, systematic corruption, and theft. Imprisoned by Carranza's orders, he is sent to Matamoros, but the Convention of Aguascalientes, a meeting of revolutionists in which was decided the way to future action of the movement, sets him free. Having been appointed Minister of War by President Roque González Garza, Guzmán rejects the post and is threatened with the penitentiary; but he escapes and goes to see Villa, who has been estranged by the Convention of Aguascalientes. The writer, caught between loyalty to the Convention and friendship toward Villa, expatriates himself to the United States.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Type of work: Poetry

Author: William Morris (1834-1896)

First published: 1868-1870

Of all the poems of William Morris, the most successful, in terms of popularity, is *The Earthly Paradise*, published originally in five thick volumes. Following closely the plan of *The Canterbury Tales*, this composition reveals Morris' attraction to Chaucer's method as well as his sense of beauty. Like Chaucer, he found in medieval legends and ancient myths material for his poetic narrative art; and he also found a general plan according to which these unrelated stories could be brought together harmoniously by a technique in which Eastern cultures had long anticipated Chaucer and other Europeans. Unlike Chaucer, whose plan was so large that he could not complete it, Morris, upon an almost equal scale, easily brought his work to a happy conclusion.

The prologue introduces a company of Norsemen who have fled the pestilence and set sail to seek the fabled Earthly Paradise "across the western sea where none grow old." Not having succeeded in their quest, they have returned "shrivelled, bent, and grey," after lengthy wanderings abroad, to a "nameless city in a distant sea" where the worship of the ancient Greek gods has not died out. In this hospitable city they spend the rest of their lives. Twice each month they participate in a feast at which a tale is told, alternately, by one of the city elders and one of the wanderers. The former tell tales on classical subjects, and the latter draw their tales from Norse and other medieval sources. Thus, of the twenty-four stories, twelve are Greek and classical and twelve are medieval or romantic. Each pair of stories corresponds with one of the twelve months, the first two being told in January, the second two in February, and so on. Thus the long poem is neatly partitioned into twelve books with interpolated prologues and epilogues in the form of lyrics about the progressive changes in nature. *The Earthly Paradise* actually revived in England an enthusiasm for long romances. Despite their high cost, many thousands of Morris' books

were sold, and the effect was a favorable one for the new revival of romantic feeling which Morris was fostering in art and decoration as well as in literature. Instead of exhausting Morris, this poetic effort inspired him to embark on other vast projects such as the translation of Homer and Vergil and a modern version of a Scandinavian epic, *Sigurd the Volsung*.

Among the tales told by the wanderers in *The Earthly Paradise*, the most striking is "The Lovers of Gudrun," a version of the Icelandic Laxdaela Saga. It tells of Gudrun, daughter of a great lord in Iceland, who was loved by many men but especially by Kiartan, a youth of manly deeds and kindly disposition. Although Gudrun passionately returns his love, Kiartan, before he will marry her, goes with his bosom friend and cousin Bodli to seek fame in Norway, where he remains some years at the court of Olaf Trygvesson. When Bodli returns alone to Iceland, he yields to his passion for Gudrun and tells her that Kiartan has fallen in love with King Olaf's sister Ingibiarg and will marry her. Convinced of Kiartan's unfaithfulness, Gudrun brokenheartedly marries Bodli. When Kiartan returns to claim his bride, Gudrun curses Bodli, and the desolate Kiartan, half in contempt, spares his life. Despairing and taunted by those about him, Bodli participates in an ambush set up by Kiartan's enemies, treacherously slays his friend, and is in turn killed by Kiartan's brothers. Although Gudrun marries again, what remains indelibly with the reader is Morris' picture of her agonized realization of what, in her faithlessness, she has done:

She cried, with tremulous voice, and
eyes grown wet
For the last time, what e'er should hap-
pen yet,
With hands stretched out for all that
she had lost:
"I did the worst to him I loved the
most."

Morris was a natural creator; that his hand could not outspeed his brain is evidenced by his composing seven hundred

lines of poetry in a day. Years after the composition of *The Earthly Paradise* he explained the nonchalant attitude toward the writing of poetry which enabled him to race undaunted through that enormous project: "Waiting for inspiration, rushing things in reliance on inspiration, and all the rest of it, are a lazy man's habits. Get the bones of the work well into your head, and the tools well into your hand, and get on with the job, and the inspiration will come to you. . . ."

In spite of its quantity of production, his poetry has a remarkably high quality. Although somewhat lacking in humor, pathos, and rich humanity, it shows none of the crabbed agonies undergone by many poets. His range of subject matter is as broad as his composition was fluent. The very spacious cycle of stories in *The Earthly Paradise* includes these titles: "The Story of Theseus," "The Son of Croesus," "Cupid and Psyche," "The King's Treasure-House," "Orpheus and Eurydice," "Pygmalion," "Atalanta's Race," "The Doom of King Acrisius," "Rhodope," "The Dolphin and the Lovers," "The Fortunes of Gygis," "Bellerophon," "The Watching of the Falcon," "The Lady of the Land," "The Hill of Venus," "The Seven Sleepers," "The Man Who Never Laughed Again," "The Palace East of the Sun," "The Queen of the North," "The Story of Dorothea," "The Writing on the Image," "The Proud King," "The Ring Given to Venus," and "The Man Born to Be King."

These stories are so arranged that, with the revolving calendar, their temper becomes darker and stronger, developing into a sinister tone at the end. The full effect thus depends upon a continuous and consecutive reading. Conversely, the problem which arises as the reader progresses through this lengthy work is that

the embroidery becomes too profuse to be sustained by the fabric. The result is the taint of decoration inherent in the Pre-Raphaelites—too much of beauty, love, languor, everything—so that the reader longs for a little substantial simplicity and cheerfulness. One might, therefore, argue for an occasional and selective reading of the stories, so long as their total scope is kept in mind.

The interludes give us glimpses into the poet's mind which are evidence that despite his disapproval of introspective poetry, Morris did not always avoid it. While the stories of *The Earthly Paradise* come from all parts of the medieval world, these poems of the months are unequivocally English; they give an admiring description of the land of Morris' birth and life. With variations, they repeat the keynote of the Prologue in which he characterizes himself as "the idle singer of an empty day" who has no power to sing of hell or heaven or to make death bearable. By "idle" Morris does not mean "useless" but, rather, one who can, by the scenes he presents, distract from "empty," daily cares. In this manner he acknowledged spiritual emptiness in his time.

Throughout this poetic work there runs a strain of despondency, doubt, and mild skepticism which records the poet's genuine pity for mankind. Although there is in the work an elemental vigor, glorying in youth, power, love, and possessions, these aspects of life are presented primarily through old men's memories. Despite the strong swift-moving action, the narrative generally seems grandly slow. Neither the tale-tellers nor the actors in the tales are particularly individualized as characters. Finally we see a vast, intricate tapestry with its panorama of interwoven figures.

ECLOGUES

Type of work: Pastoral poetry

Author: Publius Vergilius Maro (70 B.C.-19 B.C.)

First transcribed: c. 48-37 B.C.

Principal characters:

TITYRUS, an aging shepherd, sometimes thought to represent Vergil
MALIBOEUS, an exile

CORYDON, a lovelorn shepherd boy

DAPHNIS, in the fifth eclogue, a shepherd hero who had recently died

GALLUS, a poet and military leader, a friend of Vergil

Vergil's ten eclogues made their young author a nationally renowned figure when they were first made public about 39 B.C. Although these poems do not reach the heights of the *Georgics* or the *Aeneid*, they are the work of a master, not the hesitant stumblings of an apprentice writer. Vergil made the pastoral form, first popularized by Theocritus, his own and paved the way for many English poets who imitated him, among them Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, John Milton, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Matthew Arnold.

Vergil's pastoral world is not populated by Dresden-china shepherdesses in a never-never landscape; while his shepherds have their light-hearted moments, they inhabit real Italian hills and farms from which they can be evicted by unjust landlords. Exile, loneliness, and poverty threaten many of the characters in the poems. Even the traditional lovelorn shepherds are tied to Vergil's world by the naturalness of the landscape in which they lament; the heat of the Italian summer, the shade of the willow tree, the rocky hillsides where sheep pasture—all are part of the total effect of the eclogues.

Much scholarly effort has been directed toward proving that these poems are allegories that deal with contemporary events. It seems more fruitful and more realistic to accept the fact that Vergil is commenting on conditions of his age, without searching for disguised poets and government officials. There is no certainty that any shepherd represents the poet's own view, although he has often been identified with Tityrus in the first eclogue.

This poem is one of the most realistic of the group; it reflects the days after Julius Caesar's assassination when residents of northern Italy were dispossessed to

provide land for discharged soldiers. Meliboeus, one of the speakers, is among the exiles. He has left his newborn goats on the rocky road as he makes his way toward a new home in Africa, Scythia, or Britain. He laments the fact that the land he has labored to cultivate must fall into the hands of some barbarous veteran, and he inquires how his friend Tityrus has managed to escape the general desolation. Tityrus explains that he went to Rome to plead for his land and that a youth, whom some have identified with Augustus, granted his request, leaving him free to enjoy the humming of the bees on his neighbor's land. He offers his sympathy and his simple hospitality to the unfortunate Meliboeus.

The second eclogue is the disjointed lament of the Sicilian shepherd, Corydon, for his disdainful beloved, Alexis. Vergil conveys the character of Corydon brilliantly in his passionate, illogical outbursts, uttered as the boy wanders in the hot midday sun, when even lizards have sought shelter, recognizing the futility of his love, yet unable to forget the scornful youth and settle down to care properly for his vines.

Among the most vividly conceived personages of the eclogues are the two brash young shepherds who amicably insult each other in the third poem. Damoetas and Menalcas taunt each other with misdeeds they have witnessed; Damoetas has seen his friend slashing at a farmer's grapevines, while Menalcas suspects Damoetas of trying to steal a goat from Damon's flock. Damoetas spiritedly defends himself; he had won the goat legitimately in a singing match, but Damon refused to pay the prize. Menalcas scoffs at the notion of Damoetas' possessing such skill, and he is immediately challenged to a contest. The ensuing song

follows the traditional pattern; the challenger sings one verse, then his opponent adds a second in keeping with the first, and the song moves from invocations to Jove and Apollo to tributes to the sweet-hearts of each singer to realistic comments on the scene. Each singer concludes with a riddle, and Palaemon, who has been brought in as judge, decides that both deserve prizes, as do all who know the joy or bitterness of love.

The most famous of these poems is the fourth, or Messianic, eclogue, in which Vergil prophesies the birth of a child who will usher in a new golden age when peace will prevail, man and nature will become self-sufficient, commerce will cease, and the land will need no further plowing and pruning. The poet laments that he will not survive to see this new age come to fruition, but he rejoices at being able to bid the infant smile at his mother.

The identity of the expected child has been cause for extensive speculation; both Antony and Augustus became fathers about this time, and Vergil may have politically refused to single out one or the other. However, throughout the Middle Ages Vergil was thought to have foreseen the birth of Christ; for this reason he became for later ages a kind of pagan saint.

The pastoral elegy, the form of the fifth eclogue, has been imitated more often than any of the other types of poetry in this collection. Readers of English poetry may find many echoes of Mopsus' lament for Daphnis, who is mourned by nymphs, lions, and by the men whom he taught to celebrate Bacchic rites. Since his death crops have failed, as if the flowers, too, lamented; only thorns and thistles grow where the violet and narcissus were planted. Mopsus' elegy concludes with a request for shepherds to build a mound for Daphnis and to carve an epitaph commending his fame and loveliness.

Menalcas rhapsodizes over his friend's verse, then begins his own elegy, in

which he places Daphnis, now deified, at the gate of heaven, bringing peace to all the countryside. The mountains and rocks rejoice and the shepherds worship their new god in joyous rites. The contrasting moods of grief and exaltation remained a part of the pastoral tradition throughout succeeding ages, in poems like Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais*.

The prologue to the sixth eclogue gives interesting insight into Vergil's poetic ambitions. The speaker, Tityrus, comments that his earliest poetry was in the Sicilian vein, pastoral, but that he had for a time turned to kings and battles until Apollo cautioned him that a shepherd poet should sing of the countryside. Therefore he depends on others to celebrate the great deeds of his friend Varus, while he must be content to dedicate to him his rustic song about the old satyr, Silenus, who tells young satyrs and naiads old tales about the creation, the Golden Age, the fate of Prometheus, and many other mythological legends. The reference within the poem to a scene in which the Muses bestowed a reed pipe upon Gallus, one of the best-known writers of Vergil's time, has led to the suggestion that in this eclogue allusions are made to Gallus' own work. The range of subject matter is wide, and there seems to be little connection between the various episodes in Silenus' narrative.

In the seventh eclogue another singing match is described. The song of Corydon and Thyrsis reflects Vergil's deep love for the countryside and for the simplicity of the life of the shepherds. The reader can almost see the mossy springs, the budding vines of the early spring, and the chestnuts.

The eighth poem is addressed to a Roman hero, variously identified as the consul, Pollio, who is mentioned within the body of the poem, or as Augustus. Vergil will attempt to please this nobleman with the pastoral song he requested, while he waits for a chance to record his heroic exploits. In the lyric itself Damon

and Alphisiboeus recite songs for each other. The first is a lament for the infidelity of Nysa, Damon's beloved, who has married Mopsus. The deserted shepherd is both scornful and sentimental, at one moment recalling his first childhood meeting with the girl, at another bitterly berating the bridegroom or mourning the cold cruelty of the god of love. All nature should be upturned, with the wolf fleeing from the lamb and apples growing on oak trees when such a love does not take its natural course. The singer sees no final recourse but death; he will plunge from the mountain top into the waves below.

Alphisiboeus' song is a curious one. He speaks as a young girl who is trying to lure her lover home from town by witchcraft, and the song begins with a number of spells. The ashes on the girl's altar flame spontaneously in the last stanza, and she expresses her hope that the absent shepherd is, indeed, coming.

The mood of the first poem is recreated in the ninth as Moeris tells his friend Lycidas that he has been evicted from his property by a new owner. Lycidas expresses surprise; he had heard that Menalcas' poetry had preserved that land. Moeris, made wise in the world's ways by misfortune, replies that there was such a rumor, but that poetry has no force against the soldiers who are taking over the land. He and Menalcas barely escaped with their lives.

The thought that they might have lost the best of their shepherd poets recalls some of his lines to Lycidas and Moeris, and they quote them as they talk. One passage, referring to the new, beneficent

star of "Olympian Caesar," has aroused special interest, since it obviously refers to the recently deceased Julius Caesar. This eclogue ends with an appealing scene, as Lycidas urges Moeris to stop and rest beside the calm lake they are passing and to sing as they watch countrymen pruning their vines.

The final poem is another tribute to Gallus, who was a highly competent military leader, as well as a fine poet; he served as Viceroy of Egypt after the defeat of Antony at the battle of Actium. Unfortunately, his pride led to his political downfall and probably also to the loss of his poetry; we must rely on Vergil's praise for an estimate of his talents.

Gallus' mistress, Lycoris, to whom most of his love poetry had been addressed, had run away to the north of Italy with another soldier. In Vergil's poem her betrayed lover laments her loss, followed by sympathetic shepherds. He resolves to seek what comfort he can in writing pastoral verse and hunting the wild boar, yet he cannot restrain a poignant hope that the sharp glaciers of the Alps will not cut the feet of his lost lady. He realizes, finally, that even poetry and hunting are powerless to mollify the god of love; he can only yield and accept his misery.

Vergil's *Eclogues* brought a new note of personal feeling and a fresh appreciation of nature into the highly artificial and rhetorical poetic tradition of his time. It is in large part this element of humanity that has sustained the appeal of his pastorals to the present day.

EL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Miguel Ángel Asturias (1899-)

Time: Early twentieth century

Locale: Central America

First published: 1946

Principal characters:

THE PRESIDENT, dictator of a Latin American country
MIGUEL CARA DE ÁNGEL (ANGEL FACE), his crony

GENERAL EUSEBIO CANALES, a political rival
 CAMILA CANALES, his daughter
 ABEL CARVAJAL, a lawyer and a suspected Canales conspirator
 AUDITOR GENERAL DE GUERRA, a Judge Advocate
 DR. LUIS BARREÑO, the President's physician
 LUCIO VÁSQUEZ, of the Secret Police
 MR. GENGIS, a whiskey-drinking North American
 MAJOR FARFÁN, a hatchet man for the dictator
 CONCEPCIÓN GAMUCINO, ("Chón Gold Tooth"), Madame of El Dulce Encanto (The Sweet Enchantment)
 COLONEL JOSÉ PARRALES SONRIENTE, a killer for the President
 PATAHUECA (FLAT FOOT), a beggar
 EL PELELE (ZANY), another beggar
 MOSCO (MOSQUITO), a blind, legless beggar

Miguel Ángel Asturias, born in Guatemala, has spent much of his life elsewhere. Going to France in 1923, after finishing his studies as a lawyer at the University of Guatemala, he remained there for ten years, writing poetry in the French style and completing a novel about a Spanish American dictator that he had started before leaving home. He has also written other fiction and has served as Guatemala's diplomatic representative in France, Argentina, El Salvador, and Mexico. Following the increasing success of his writings, he retired to Buenos Aires with his wife and two sons.

It is chiefly for this bitter picture of a morally sick Latin American nation under dictatorship, a disease suffered by many of them, that he is recognized as an important New World author. The pictures of human misery in this novel make a powerful impression on even those critics who find it aesthetically weak. *El Señor Presidente* is rather like that other picture of Central American dictatorships, an example of *esperpéntica*, a mixture of satire and the grotesque.

The novel provides no clue as to date or locale, beyond the mention, when Cara de Ángel was searching the pages of *El Nacional* for an announcement of his wedding, that he saw mention of the Battle of Verdun, at a time when Manuel Estrada Cabrera was the Guatemalan president. Apparently Asturias had no special target in mind.

As if to lighten the unpleasant pictures

of oppression and the exploitation of the poor, the author includes bits of folklore, references to 'Tohil, Giver of Fire, folk poetry, and descriptions that might have come from Asturias' earlier French impressionist poetry period. Local color and regional words are so numerous in the novel that Asturias felt the need to include a vocabulary and glossary covering eight pages. The French version of the novel was awarded first place in the International Novel Competition in 1952.

The novel that Asturias felt the need to name President of an unnamed Spanish American nation. He is a dictator who maintains himself in power by cruelty and ruthlessness, though his portrait, pasted everywhere, with punishment for its removal, makes him appear a youthful charmer wearing huge epaulets and about to be crowned with a laurel wreath by a smiling cherub. Judge Advocate de Guerra summed up the President's theory of control: never let anyone have grounds for hope; make them realize, by brutal beatings and kickings if necessary, that there is none. The President, lamenting the murder of his hatchetman, Colonel Parrales Sonriente, killed by a crazy beggar named Zany whom he had taunted on the cathedral steps, also revealed his philosophy by declaring that he had intended to make Parrales a general because of his ability to trample on the populace and humiliate them.

The killing of the officer provided the President with an excuse for getting rid

of a political rival, General Canales, along with a fellow plotter, Lawyer Abel Carvajal. The Advocate General gathered up all the beggars from the cathedral door where the killing had taken place and beat them until they were willing to swear they had seen Canales commit the murder. The only one refusing to sign the accusation, Mosquito, the legless, blind beggar, was beaten to death. To prevent discovery of the true facts, Vásquez, of the secret police, came upon Zany, the real murderer, trying to flee, and silenced him with two bullets.

Further evidence of the merciless nature of the President is revealed as he orders the beating of his personal physician, Dr. Barreño, for uncovering political graft that had caused the death of soldiers at the hospital, poisoned by impure sodium sulphate. Even worse, he has his secretary whipped to death for spilling ink on a document. It is easy to understand how such a man could mark the innocent General Canales for death.

In order to carry out his scheme against General Canales, the President involved his crony, Miguel Angel Face, in an elaborate plot, first ordering the police to shoot the general if he attempted to flee, then sending Angel Face to warn him of his danger and urge him to escape. The crony, in love with the gener-

al's daughter, betrayed his master by getting his victim safely across the frontier. However, the general died before he could recruit an army for invasion.

Complications, including acceptance of bribes by the Judge Advocate to put Camila Canales into the Sweet Enchantment brothel, and her rescue by Angel Face, resulted in the arrangement of the marriage of Camila and Angel Face by the President to insure the loyalty of his crony, but through treachery Angel Face was illegally imprisoned and soon died. Other rebels against the President also died. As opposition continued, so did the atmosphere of terror that allowed the dictator's favorites to thrive in a generally corrupt society. With the Secret Police in power El Señor Presidente continued to have his way.

A dictatorship in Spanish America may have several aspects. It is frequently viewed by the outside world as a comic opera sort of thing. O. Henry and others have written of its amusing moments and its romantic and adventurous episodes such as gun-running, but frequently it is much more tragic and cruel. The stakes are high and the financial returns enormous. History records many long-term Latin American dictatorships. Asturias' novel shows how fear and terror can make such longevity possible.

THE ELDER STATESMAN

Type of work: Drama

Author: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Time: The present

Locale: London and Badgley Court, a nursing home

First presented: 1958

Principal characters:

LORD CLAVERTON, the "elder statesman"

MICHAEL CLAVERTON-FERRY, his son

MONICA CLAVERTON-FERRY, his daughter

CHARLES HEMINGTON, her fiancé

"FEDERICO GOMEZ," formerly Fred Culverwell

"MRS. CARGHILL" (Maisie Batterson, alias MAISIE MONTJOY), a woman out of Lord Claverton's past

At the first production of this play during the Edinburgh Festival in the sum-

mer of 1958, it was accorded more praise than had been given to Eliot's earlier dra-

matic works. It was described as being "warmer," "mellower," and "more human" than *Murder in the Cathedral* or *The Cocktail Party*, which had been received with the respectful attention due the work of a great poet rather than with any genuine enthusiasm. Yet since its publication in England and America, the play has attracted far less notice than might have been expected when one considers the reputation of its author.

In an essay of 1951, "Poetry and Drama," Eliot discussed at some length not only the general question of the poetic drama but also the particular problems that he had encountered in writing his own plays. The crux of this problem was to find a form of verse such that the audience would not be conscious of it. This search led Eliot to reject some of the methods that his predecessors in poetic drama had employed. Blank verse, he felt, would not do, for, through its long use in nondramatic poetry after the Elizabethan age, it had lost the flexibility necessary to give the proper conversational tone; and to the use of blank verse he attributed the failure of nineteenth century poets who had attempted plays in verse. The prose poetry of Synge was too limited to the Aran Islands; the poetry of William Butler Yeats's later plays was suitable only for mythological kings and queens. For this reason Eliot felt that he had to forge his own tool if he were to write plays of contemporary people, not historical pageants. And so, beginning with *The Family Reunion*, he employed a line varying in length and syllables, with a caesura and three stresses, with one stress on one side of the caesura and two on the other. This versification, Eliot thought, would be close enough to the rhythm of contemporary speech to avoid the obviously "poetic" that would be unacceptable to a modern audience.

As in his later plays, *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, and *The Confidential Clerk*, Eliot here chose a contemporary setting and an apparently simple plot. But since, in the essay cited

above, he slyly confessed that the plot of *The Cocktail Party* had been merely that of the *Alcestis* of Euripides in modern dress and that no one had noticed this fact, we cannot be certain that some Greek play may not be lurking beneath the surface of *The Elder Statesman*. Certainly, however, none is immediately apparent.

Although Lord Claverton, the "elder statesman," does not appear at the opening of the play, he dominates the scene from the rising of the curtain. His daughter's fiancé, Charles, is protesting that, should he stay for tea in the Claverton town house, he will not be able to have any private conversation with Monica because of her father's presence. It is clear that Monica worships her father, who has been a famous man in both the political and financial worlds of England but who has now, on his doctor's orders, retired from public life and is preparing for a rest cure at Badgley Court, a nursing home somewhere in the country. When Lord Claverton enters, we are conscious of a man of great dignity who has always expected deference and who has received it, although now he has become querulous over the emptiness of his future. Like most men of affairs who have been compelled to give up their former activities, he realizes the hollowness of his past eminence, yet cannot endure the prospect of a life devoid of these activities. Life is now a mere waiting for death. He recognizes himself as a ghost and, with dramatic irony, remarks that he smiles when he thinks men are frightened of ghosts.

Hardly has this remark been uttered when the first ghost from his own past arrives in the form of one Señor Gomez from the Latin American Republic of San Marco. Almost immediately Gomez is revealed as Fred Culverwell, a friend of Lord Claverton's Oxford days. The unbearably suave expatriate is in possession of a damaging secret: when, years ago, the two university students were driving at night with two girls, Claverton—then plain Dick Ferry—ran over a

man and did not stop because he feared the possible scandal. Culverwell also accuses Claverton of having been the cause of his ruin in England: by taking him up at Oxford and teaching him expensive tastes which he, a poor boy, lacked the means to gratify, Claverton had forced him to resort to theft and finally to forgery which had led to a prison sentence and flight from England. But in San Marco, with its peculiar political situation, he had done well; he is no crude blackmailer and wants only Claverton's friendship, something to give him "reality" after thirty-five years of homesick exile under an assumed name. He is a realist; he knows that, although a worldly success, he has failed, though not so badly as has Claverton, who has had to keep on pretending to himself that he has succeeded. To Claverton's credit, he stands the attack well, maintains his dignity, and shows no fear of the moral blackmail that Culverwell is so subtly exercising.

Lord Claverton's doctor had ordered him to Badgley Court, a nursing home run in a grimly cheerful fashion, for a complete rest. But hardly has he arrived when there appears another ghost from his past, this time in the form of Mrs. Carghill. A generation before she had been Maisie Montjoy, a star of the music halls; now she is a prosperous widow. The Dick Ferry of those far-off days had been in love with her and she with him—or so she claims. But she had settled her breach of promise suit out of court, and now she retains only sentimental memories and all of his letters, both the originals and photostatic copies. Again Lord Claverton, in spite of her sarcastic comments, maintains his unruffled dignity, even when she points out that there is only a negligible difference between being an elder statesman and posing as one. Twice have these ghosts brought home to him his essential emptiness.

The ultimate trial comes in the form of his son Michael, a spendthrift and ne'er-

do-well who, even in his effort to see his father, has become involved in a motor accident, though not a serious one. In a sense, Michael is also a ghost, the ghost of the boy Claverton might have been had he not been possessed by a devil who was prudent as well as wayward. The son, though obviously a weakling, does have his side of the story: he is desperately eager to get out of England into some country where he can have a life of his own, free from the oppressive shadow of his father's great name. It is clear that the father has dominated the son far too much. But just as the situation between the two seems to have reached an impasse, the solution is provided by the two "ghosts"; Mrs. Carghill has suggested to Gomez that he take Michael back with him to the mysterious business in San Marco. But the price that has to be paid for this solution to the problem is that Claverton must have all his past errors laid bare before his daughter and her fiancé. This is his act of contrition, after which he receives absolution in the form of Monica's forgiveness and understanding. The ghosts from his past are at last exorcised, to return into the darkness whence they came. And so he goes out into the grounds of the nursing home to await death, much as Oedipus left the grove at Colonus sacred to the Eumenides to find his appointed end. The mask of the "elder statesman" has been dropped forever; he has become himself, the real man under the mask.

Aristotle asserted that "A discovery is, as the very word implies, a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate in the personages marked for good or evil fortune." This feature of the classical drama is perfectly illustrated in Eliot's play, for it is by the discovery of his true self that Claverton is able to achieve love. He realizes at last the real nature of his past mistakes; he had always proceeded by the letter of the law; he has never been technically guilty, for the man he had run over was

proved to be dead before the accident, and Maisie had been paid off handsomely. He had never understood his wife and his son because he had never loved them. Even his affection for his daughter had been mere possessiveness. Now that he understands himself, can understand that his whole career has been a sham, he can love and hence can find peace. The central theme of the play is, thus, the Christian doctrine of redemption; and redemption leads to love.

It is, of course, unfair to judge a play only by reading it. Certainly *The Elder Statesman* was well received when it appeared. It is also certain that Eliot has been more successful in finding the right

poetic language for this play than in his previous efforts. It is probable, however, that many readers will find the play essentially undramatic. The pace is too even; there is a lack of suspense and excitement, which may be crude elements but which are necessary to a good play. Exquisitely handled language does not alone make for effective drama. Perhaps Eliot has been on the wrong track in attributing the failure of the poetic drama of the nineteenth century to the choice of a poor poetic medium. Perhaps these poets, like Eliot himself, lacked the real feeling for the theater which is often possessed by greatly inferior writers.

THE ELEGIES OF PROPERTIUS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Sextus Propertius (C. 50 B.C.-before A.D. 2)

First transcribed: Elegies, I, 26 B.C.(?); II, 24-23 B.C.(?); III, 22-21 B.C.(?); IV, not earlier than 16 B.C.

Sextus Propertius wrote in the poetic genre known as the Roman love elegy, a form first developed and made famous by Gallus (of whose work only one line survives), Tibullus, Ovid, and Propertius himself. The love elegy was written in alternating hexameter and pentameter lines; the pentameter was actually a hexameter shortened by the removal of syllable in the middle and another at the end of the line. The tone of this genre was always personal and passionate, and it was characterized by the first-person lament of the frustrated or grieving lover alternating with erotic joy. It is from the unhappy aspect of the Roman love elegy that our understanding of the word "elegiac" has developed.

Each of the three more or less contemporary early elegists whose work has, at least in part, survived has a distinctive effect. Tibullus is a man of great sensibility who suffers tenderly. Ovid is an erotic cynic who treats love as a game. Proper-

tius is a passionate and tempestuous lover who both loudly complains and exalts in his love. His style, while generally smooth, vivid, and rapid, is sometimes freighted with a heavy load of learning. Love is not the unique subject of Propertius' four surviving books of elegies—the elegiac form was capable of other subjects than love—but it is his love poems that are the most interesting. Making up the greater part of the work, they are what concerns the modern reader.

Propertius was born in the province of Umbria, Italy; his family was of equestrian rank. His father died when he was a boy and the family suffered serious financial reverses. Propertius began to study the law in his youth, but soon left it for poetry. From its beginning the essential subject of his poetry was his grand passion for Cynthia—her real name was Hostia. Cynthia was a loose woman; she was not exactly a prostitute, but a courtesan who made her living by pleasing

wealthy men. Propertius' affair with her was marked by frequent infidelities on Cynthia's part and much anger and lament on Propertius' part. But Propertius had a mind of his own and was, if blindly in love, still capable of dealing with the equally strong-minded Cynthia.

Book One contains twenty-three poems. The first is an introduction to his love affair and the last is a brief biographical sketch, though more important biographical information is found in the first poem of Book Four. The remaining poems in the first book are concerned with various aspects of the poet's passion.

The first poem, which gives us the basic outline and describes the specific nature of the poet's relationship to Cynthia, states that she first taught Propertius what it was to love, though he had formerly been involved with one Lycinna. For a year he has suffered an agony of love and has been wholly drawn away from the decent life and any interest in honest women, all this despite the fact that Cynthia has refused to love him and to make his life less painful. Finally, however, Cynthia gave in. In the second poem we find a description of Cynthia's charms. Pointing out that she is wholly beautiful, Propertius tells Cynthia to forget useless adornments and go naked, as does love himself. In the third elegy we get our first really close look at the woman. The poet, home late from a party, speaks over his sleeping mistress. She awakes and petulantly chides him for keeping her awake with worry. Four, five, and six are thematically related in that all have to do with attempts to separate the poet from Cynthia. First he argues with a friend who wants him to break with her. Then he warns another friend to stop making overtures to her. Later he regretfully tells another friend that Cynthia will not let him travel abroad with the friend. Here we see another dimension of this love affair. Propertius, full of passion, is nevertheless irritated by Cynthia's possessiveness. This and similar paradoxes have much to do

with the interest of Propertius' love poetry. The very perversity of the two strong-minded lovers attracts us.

In the seventh poem, Propertius warns the epic poet Ponticus that he will be less satisfied with himself and the epic style if he should ever fall in love. In the eighth a crisis arises. Cynthia has decided that she will go abroad, and with a rival of the poet. Propertius prays for a storm to hold her back, but he wishes her a safe trip if she does go. Then in eight-A, he ecstatically informs us that Cynthia has decided not to go. In nine we find Propertius saying, in effect, "I told you so" to the epic poet of poem seven, and in ten Propertius is happy because a possible rival has been sidetracked. Cynthia, we find in eleven, has gone to the seaside resort of Baiae, and the poet is worried that she will act scandalously and ruin her "good" name; he begs her to come back to Rome. Twelve and thirteen form a pair: in the former Propertius admits that he has been unable to work lately because of his all dominating attachment to the once more estranged Cynthia. In the latter, the poet, speaking to the man who has just accused him of sloth, says that his friend may gloat over Propertius' love troubles, but that he will not retaliate. Next, in number fourteen, we hear of a reconciliation. The pleasures of love, the poet claims, are superior to the joys of wealth. But in fifteen we find that Propertius is again in trouble with Cynthia. Though he must face some danger, Cynthia is unconcerned and takes a new lover. The poet claims that he will nevertheless remain faithful.

Poems sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen are the lover's laments. The first is expressed beside Cynthia's door, now closed to him; the second has for background a storm at sea; and the third poem, a very influential piece, is set in a wild and lonely forest. Apparently the laments had some effect, for in nineteen the lovers seem to be reconciled. In this piece Propertius contemplates death and urges lovers to love while they may. Nei-

ther twenty, twenty-one, or twenty-three (the autobiographical poem) are concerned with Cynthia. Twenty is a version of the myth of the rape of Hylas, and twenty-one contains the final words of a man being murdered by bandits.

The appearance and success of the first book of elegies brought Propertius to the attention of the great Roman patron of letters, Maecenas. Propertius was admitted to his circle, and thus Book Two begins with a dedicatory poem to Maecenas. Here the poet protests he can only write of love, since his being is dominated by Cynthia. Poems two through nine return to the subject of his love. Cynthia's beauty is praised more fully; her perversity and falseness are described; the poet's continued infatuation and his joy at the repeal of a law that might have forced him to abandon the woman are discussed. Just as love was previously seen to be superior to wealth, it is here proclaimed more wonderful than the soldier's glory. In the tenth poem however, the poet momentarily turns from love, claiming that only youth writes of that subject; now he will turn to the more mature subject of war. Then, he immediately reverses himself, and the rest of the rather confused second book discusses various aspects of his affair with Cynthia. In these poems we observe an interesting aspect of the affair and a clever bit of lover's flattery. Propertius emphasizes the intellectual ability and literary judgment of his mistress. In poem thirteen, for example, he claims that he is not impressed with beauty and breeding alone in a woman. His greatest joy is to lie in the arms of Cynthia, reading his poems which she so intelligently appreciates and so judiciously criticizes. As the book proceeds, however, Propertius' recriminations become both more frequent and bitter; the affair is subtly changing for the worse.

This progress comes to its climax in Book Three. Though he writes on several other topics, love is still his important theme. Particularly noteworthy are poems

ten, fifteen, twenty-four and twenty-five. Ten is a beautiful and clever elegy on Cynthia's birthday. The poet sensuously describes the awakening of Cynthia, the birthday ceremonies, the rich and happy banquet; then, he suggests, after much joy and many emptied goblets they will retire to the bedroom to conduct those rites appointed by Venus and thus complete the course of her natal day. Fifteen is interesting in that it speaks of his adolescent love, Lycinna (mentioned several other times in the elegies) who was Propertius' introduction to women. He gives some details of the early affair and a description of how Cynthia swept Lycinna from his mind. In poems twenty-four and twenty-five, the poet bitterly proclaims his final break with Cynthia. In the first Propertius says that the too proud Cynthia puts too much trust in the efficacy of her beauty. As for him, after a long time being tossed about in the sea of love, he has now escaped and is cured of his infatuation. Henceforth, good sense will dictate his ways. In the second poem, the poet remains adamant despite the tears of Cynthia, for too often in the past has he been beguiled by her weeping. For five years her domination of him has been a public joke. He ends by cursing her with a wrinkled old age and says that he will relish her inevitable loneliness.

Book Four is almost wholly taken up with more solemn themes than love. Included are a series of aetiological poems on the god Vertumnus (two), on Tarpeia (four), on the anniversary of Actium (six), on the Great Altar of Rome (nine) and on Jupiter Feretrius (ten). Only two poems, seven and eight, are concerned with Cynthia. Both are excellent. Seven is in the form of a striking and touching interview with Cynthia's ghost in which she chides a moved Propertius for his neglect. Eight is an amusing and active retrospective account of a night when Propertius, bitter at Cynthia's harsh treatment, set out to console himself with two other ladies of easy virtue. Suddenly Cynthia shows up. She violently drives

off the girls and physically attacks Propertius. He bows to her chastisements and all is made well on the couch so familiar to them.

Book Four closes with a solemn funeral poem which, paradoxically for a poet made famous by his love poems, is com-

monly accounted Propertius' greatest single elegy. The poem celebrates Cornelia, the daughter of Augustus' wife Scribonia. Noble in tone, the poem praises the virtue of the dead woman to the judges of the dead, to her family, and to the world.

ELMER GANTRY

Author: Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951)

Type of work: Novel

Time: 1915-1925

Locale: Midwest America

First published: 1927

Principal characters:

ELMER GANTRY, a minister

JIM LEFFERTS, Elmer's companion in rowdiness during his days at Terwillinger College

JUDSON ROBERTS, an ex-football star, State Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., and the main reason for Elmer's so-called conversion

FRANK SHALLARD, a minister and Elmer's chief antagonist

EDDIE FISLINGER, during college, theological school, and in life, a minister and distant admirer of Gantry, constantly hoping to convert him

MRS. GANTRY, Elmer's mother

WALLACE, UMSTEAD, the "Director of Physical Culture" at Mizpah Theological Seminary

HORACE CARP, one of the High Churchmen in the seminary

HARRY ZENZ, the seminary iconoclast

JACOB TROSPER, D.D., Ph.D., LL.D., and Dean of Mizpah Theological Seminary

LULU BAINS, Elmer's mistress

AD LOCUST, a traveling salesman for the Pequot Farm Implement Company

SHARON FALCONER, a woman evangelist

CECIL AYLSTON, Sharon Falconer's assistant

ART NICHOLS, player of the cornet and French horn in Sharon Falconer's three-piece orchestra

MRS. EVANS RIDDLE, an evangelist, a New Thought leader

CLEO BENHAM GANTRY, Elmer's wife

T. J. RIGGS, a rich associate of Elmer in Zenith

HETTIE DOWLER, another of Elmer's mistresses

OSCAR DOWLER, Hettie's husband and companion in trying to trap Elmer

Sinclair Lewis wrote *Elmer Gantry* at the height of his fame, in the middle of the remarkable decade of the 1920's that began for Lewis with *Main Street* and ended with *Dodsworth* and that saw not only *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith* but also their author's refusal of a Pulitzer Prize that had been awarded to him. Yet curi-

ously, *Elmer Gantry* gives us a first hint of the waning of Lewis' powers. Before this novel Lewis had served a long apprenticeship, and had achieved great success. From 1915 to 1920 he wrote fifty short stories and five novels, trying out his themes and characterizations, sketching out his satiric portraits of various

types; not the least among these were religious types, though the climax of that kind of portraiture was not to come until *Elmer Gantry* appeared in 1927.

Main Street burst upon the world in 1920, the result of several years Lewis spent perfecting his method of research to establish the realistic foundation upon which his satires were to rest. His book was a sensational best seller, and apparently it occurred to Lewis that he could repeat his success if he would only, in a programmatic way, turn his satiric eye upon the various aspects of American life in sequence. After his exposure of the village he next chose Zenith, a middle-sized city, and George F. Babbitt a middle-class businessman. Then he applied his attention (now in collaboration with Dr. Paul de Kruif) to medicine, public health, and medical experimentation. Other projects flashed through his mind and were rejected, until he at last found a challenging project he could eagerly work upon, the ministry; and he began to consider how he could assemble ideas, plot, character, and especially background for what would later become *Elmer Gantry*. Undertaking an exposure of hypocrisy in religion was a formidable and dangerous task, but Lewis felt confidently ready for it. In *Babbitt* he had written of Mike Monday, the evangelist; Mrs. Opal Emerson Mudge, leader of the New Thought League; and the Reverend John Jennison Drew, author of *The Manly Man's Religion*.

Following his usual method of research, he sought expert advice to provide the background for his novel. Acquainted with a minister in Kansas City, he went there to find some of his material. He gathered a weekly "seminar" of local pastors of many faiths and sects; after luncheon, there might be a session on "The Holy Spirit," with Lewis challenging, pressing, arguing, and thus absorbing material. Gradually, characters and plot took shape. Elmer Gantry was to be Lewis' most extravagant faker, a salesman of religion with no real knowledge

of theology and no scruples or morals, a stupid man who would exploit his parishioners as he climbed to success from village to town to city, a seducer of women, a man of greed.

Elmer Gantry, captain of the football team at Terwillinger College, was known as "Hell-cat" to his classmates and especially to his roommate, a drinking, and carousing friend, Jim Lefferts. Then something happened to convert Gantry from being the heathen that he was; he was taken up with the moment. He had met Judson Roberts, the ex-football star who had a following among members of the "manly" set. Gantry's mother had been urging him to give his soul to God and so at a prayer meeting Elmer was swept up and converted with a mob of other "saved" people, while his mother, Judson Roberts, and his disbelieving classmates looked on. From that point on, Lewis exposed Gantry's cheap education, revealed his mistaken, temporary, and even fraudulent initial religious impulses, surrounded him with religionists of neither character nor morality, carried him through several near-catastrophes, only to allow Gantry to recover and rise further still.

Gantry was ordained a minister at Mizpah Theological Seminary. During his time there he was sent to a spur-line town, Schoenheim, with an assistant, Frank Shallard. Shallard, noting Gantry's questionable motives toward Lulu Bains, a deacon's daughter, reproached Elmer and threatened to take the matter to Dean Trosper. Gantry caught Shallard off guard and reminded him that his faith was shaky and that if Dean Trosper were to know of this it would end Shallard's career at the seminary. When Shallard realized that someone else was aware of this problem, he left the post at Schoenheim and devoted his time to added study. But in his effort to set against Gantry some men of good will and genuine religiosity, Lewis' imagination and understanding failed him, and no true opponent, no convincing expression of

what religion could mean or be, emerges from the book. Frank Shallard, Elmer's chief antagonist, remains only a shadowy character; finally his doubts get the best of him and he leaves the ministry in order to put his Christian principles into practice—and he is painfully defeated.

But Gantry's troubles with Lulu Bains had just begun; she informed him that they must get married and thus Gantry was forced into announcing his betrothal to her. He finally managed to get Lulu involved with an innocent but willing bystander, and in this way he was able to break the engagement.

Gantry left Schoenheim, supposedly heartbroken, and was sent to a new post in Monarch. On his way to preach the Sunday sermon he met Ad Locust, a traveling salesman for the Pequot Farm Implement Company. When Gantry became too drunk to show up at the church, he was fired from the seminary, even though he remained an ordained Baptist minister. Elmer then took a job with the Pequot Farm Implement Company and worked for them for two years. While in Sautersville, Nebraska, he met Sharon Falconer, a woman evangelist. He followed her and eventually became her assistant and lover. Everything went well for Gantry until the opening of Sharon's Waters of Jordan Tabernacle, which burned, killing a large number of the attending worshipers and Sharon.

Gantry then took up with Mrs. Evans Riddle, but he was kicked out of her group when she discovered that he was stealing from the collection. He then moved to a Methodist pastorate after teaching his own school of thought for a brief time. At this post he married Cleo Benham. After several successful charges in larger churches, Gantry was given a large church in New York. Gantry had not lived a pious life even after his marriage, and he became involved with his secretary, Mrs. Hettie Dowler. Those who opposed him used this opportunity to get back at him for his hellfire and brimstone sermons in which he spared no

one. The newspapers got wind of the scandal and printed it, but T. J. Riggs saved Gantry from ruin. Gantry swore he would never again desire another woman, but as he knelt to pray because of his congregation's faith in him, he noticed at the same time the ankles of a new and attractive choir member.

Lewis has shown us a large gallery of ministerial frauds, such as Mrs. Riddle, the New Thought leader who taught classes in Concentration, Prosperity, Love, Metaphysics, Oriental Mysticism, and the Fourth Dimension, as well as how to keep one's husband. Another example is Judson Roberts, the state secretary of the Y.M.C.A., a young giant with curly hair and a booming voice that he used to bring in the big fellows.

Lewis gave much of his attention to his portrait of Sharon Falconer, the beautiful and somewhat mad female evangelist who preaches in a majestic temple, then leads Gantry to her retreat in the hills where she allows herself to be seduced on an altar she has built to such pagan goddesses as Astarte. Sharon says she has visions and confesses that she hates little vices like smoking and swearing but loves big ones like lust and murder. Yet from some confused notions about God Sharon derives sufficient strength to stand at the pulpit in her burning tabernacle and attempt to quell the panic of the mob of her parishioners, while Gantry knocks aside dozens of helpless people and is able to escape. Into such scenes as these, and into the final episode in which Gantry narrowly is saved from entrapment in the old badger game, Lewis poured all his vitality. But what critics have missed, and what seems to suggest the first waning of Lewis' powers, is the lack of any real opposition, referred to before. In Gantry himself there seems to be no decency, and therefore there are no alternatives contending in his soul. In the "good" characters there is insufficient understanding and fortitude, and they neither supply important alternatives nor force Gantry to any

choices. In this book Lewis displayed his virtuosity as a satirist, but he also indulged it and failed to find for it any opposition in positive values. Thus, as a satirist of American life, he was by now really beginning to repeat himself, and it turned out to be essentially true (though not without some occasional exceptions) that he was to go on for about twenty-five years looking here and there for aspects of American life to expose, exploiting as best he could his earlier brilliance at re-

cording the clichés of our lives and language but not advancing to any new understanding either for himself or for his readers. Meanwhile, the world moved on. If he was right that there was hypocrisy and corruption in the religious practices of America, his portrait was also incomplete in not showing us some of the glimmer that would begin to be fanned into the light of leadership that religion is trying to provide in the crises of today.

ÈLOGES AND OTHER POEMS

Author: St.-John Perse (Alexis St.-Léger Léger, 1887-)
First published: 1910; enlarged edition, 1956

In its present form *Èloges (Praises)* is a revised collection made up of poems dating as far back as 1909, to which has been added "Lullaby" ("Berceuse"), first published in 1945.

Alexis St.-Léger Léger, who writes under the name of St.-John Perse, was born in Guadeloupe, and he has had a long and very distinguished career in both the prewar and postwar French diplomatic service, and thus represents the peculiarly French combination of the public servant and the man of letters. Though his *Anabasis* has been translated by so famous a writer as T. S. Eliot, he remains little known to American readers, in spite of his great reputation in Continental literary circles. Because of the obscurity of his poems, it is highly improbable that his work will ever achieve any wide degree of popularity; nevertheless, because of his marked influence on modern poetry, he is an important figure, at least to the literary historian.

"Pictures for Crusoe," the earliest of the poems included in the volume, should be read first; they are the clearest and, when once understood, provide a sort of key to the other sections. In them, the reader is made immediately aware of the author's background of a childhood spent in the tropics—the succession of luxuriant images from the island left be-

hind by Crusoe, the nostalgia for the clean wind and sea and sand, for the brilliant colors of dawn and sunset. It is the theme of this series of short poems that Crusoe's real disaster occurs when he returns to the cities of men and leaves forever the lost tropic island. Everything that he brings with him, every symbol of the island—the goatskin parasol, the bow, the parrot—decays in the sour dirt of the city; the seed of the purple tropic flower that he plants will not grow; even Goodman Friday, as he steals from the larder, leers with eyes that have become sly and vicious. Crusoe weeps, remembering the surf, the moonlight, and other, distant shores.

The same theme of nostalgia, much less clearly stated, runs through the longer poems entitled "To Celebrate a Childhood" and "Praises." Here the poet tries to recapture, by the same device of a series of pictures, the lost world of a childhood spent against the background of violent contrasts of brilliant light and shining water and crowding vegetation that is in memory the tropics. The lush images succeed one another with bewildering rapidity until a total effect is achieved and the lost childhood is recreated. Indeed, the images are heaped with such profusion that the poems become almost cloying, like over-ripe fruit.

There is a shift of emphasis here also, for no longer is there a contrast between two worlds, the island and the city, but rather an almost total recall of the beauty and the squalor of the tropics.

The second section of the book, "The Glory of Kings," consists of four poems, two written in 1910 and two in 1924. These poems are much more obscure than those in the first section. In them, Perse seems to have moved from the background of his childhood in Guadeloupe to the world of some primitive people where nameless speakers address praises to their half-human, half-divine rulers—the Queen, a mysterious Sphinx-like creature, at once the queen and the mother; the Prince, with his towering headdress, the Healer and Enchanter, keeping vigil. It may be that Perse is trying to express something of the spirit in which members of a primitive society identify themselves with their rulers, until the King becomes the symbol, indeed the very soul, of his people and is rejoiced in as such. By implication, this attitude is set against the critical, questioning attitude of modern man, shorn of reverence, cut off from "the sources of the spirit." "The Glory of Kings" seems to develop further a theme implicit in "Pictures for Crusoe"—the modern cult of the primitive that has appeared in the work of so many contemporary writers.

Under the first pen name of their author, these early poems by Perse are referred to by Proust, who, in *Cities of the Plain*, gives an appreciation of them and an indication of the likely reaction of the average reader. Lying on the narrator's bed was a book of the admirable but ambiguous poems of Saint-Léger Léger. Mme. Céleste Albaret picks up the book and asks if he is sure that they are poems and not riddles. It is natural that Proust, preoccupied as he was with the evocation of the past in all of its subtle ramifications in time and place, would have delighted in a poet bent on the same task of recapturing the totality of the experiences of childhood—the sights, the sounds, the

odors. Nor is it surprising that these pictures from the tropics, so different from the hothouse, artificial life that Proust knew, should, by their very contrast, have appealed to him.

Yet by including the remark of Mme. Céleste, so distressing to the narrator, Proust succinctly indicates the probable response of most readers of poetry who in this volume approach Perse for the first time. For it cannot be denied that these poems make very difficult reading. T. S. Eliot, in his preface to his translation of Perse's *Anabasis*, tries to defend the author against the charge of willful obscurity by saying that their seeming obscurity is due to the linkage of explanatory and connecting matter, not to incoherence. Eliot's advice to the reader was to allow the images of the poem to fall into the memory with unquestioning acceptance, each contributing to a total effect apparent at the end of the poem. It is an indication of the contribution that Perse has made to the technique of modern poetry that this analysis could equally well be applied to much of Eliot's own work.

It is by means of this sequence of images, abruptly shifting into one another, that Perse achieves his total effect. It is this aspect of his technique that has elicited the special praise of Valéry Larbaud, who considers his descriptions far superior to those of Chateaubriand: concrete, exact, precise, and filled with meaning. The result is a blending of the ugly and the beautiful, the whole a passionate rendering of experience. In his descriptions Perse makes full use of a device so characteristic of contemporary poetry: the sudden juxtaposition of the "poetic" and the deliberately ugly or grotesque. A coconut, tossed into the street, "diverts from the gutter/the metallic splendor of the purple waters mottled with grease and urine, where soap weaves a spider's web." It is difficult to realize that such lines were being written in France in 1910, at a time when English poetry was dominated by the Georgians.

No modern poet so little known to the

reading public has received from his fellow craftsmen such high praise as has Perse. He has been translated into English, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Rumanian. Hugo von Hofmannsthal considers that a direct road leads from Rimbaud to the early work of Stefan George and to that of Perse. Valéry Larbaud maintains that between 1895 and 1925 perhaps a hundred poets appeared in France, of whom at least thirty continue to be worthy of attention; of these thirty, only five—Claudel, Jammes, Valéry, Fargue, and Perse—will survive. To

both of these critics, Perse is valuable because of his attempt, through the manipulation of language and his brilliant descriptions, to revivify French lyricism. It may well be, however, that Perse will remain essentially a poets' poet, important to other writers because of what they can learn from his method, rather than a poet for the general reader. It is no longer necessary for the poet to appeal to the community and the wider view. He may now appeal to himself and the urgencies of his private vision.

THE END OF THE ROAD

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Barth (1930-)

Time: 1951-1955

Locale: Wicomico, Maryland

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

JACOB HORNER, a teacher of English, the narrator

JOE MORGAN, a teacher of history

RENNIE MORGAN, his wife

PEGGY RANKIN, a teacher of English

THE DOCTOR, a doubtful M.D.

The End of the Road begins ambiguously with some doubt as to the narrator's, Jacob Horner's, existence. He tells us that he became a teacher of English at Wicomico State Teachers College on the advice of the Doctor, never given a name, who operates a Remobilization Farm for the treatment of functional paralysis. Between this doubtful beginning and the non-ending, Barth examines the problems of existence and identity that began with his first novel, *The Floating Opera*.

Read on a literal level, the story is a rather banal love triangle involving Jacob, Joe Morgan, and Joe's wife. Read on a serious abstract ethical level, it becomes the setting for a duel of opposing points of view, both concerned with the problems of nihilism.

Jacob meets the Doctor in a railroad station, where he has come after finishing his oral examination for his Master's Degree. In trying to decide where to go for a

vacation, he has been overcome by paralysis. He is unable to make a choice. No one destination seems better than another; his will to do anything at all is paralyzed. The Doctor takes him to his Remobilization Farm near Wicomico and begins a series of therapies designed to avoid situations involving complicated choices, the point being to make some choice, any choice, in order to keep moving, so that he would not fall into immobility again.

Mythotherapy, based on the existentialist premises that existence precedes essence, and that man is free not only to choose his essence but to change it at will, is the chief therapy prescribed for Jacob. It is a process of assigning a role to himself and carrying it out logically. It is essentially a mask to protect the ego.

At the college, Jacob becomes acquainted with Joe Morgan and his wife Rennie. The relationship quickly devel-

ops into a love triangle, but one in which the responsibility is shared equally by all three. Here, as elsewhere, Barth gives us no chance to make any judgments, to fasten onto any solid ethical ground. *The End of the Road* is a short novel with the characters sketched and filled in quickly, with very little background or examination of motivational processes.

Jacob's *modus operandi* is mythotherapy. Joe's is one of ethical positivism; he has a set of consistent, relative values which he is trying to impress on Rennie. It is around Rennie that the action centers. While teaching Jacob to ride horseback, she tells him of her meeting with Joe, their subsequent relationship and marriage. Until she met Joe, she had no philosophy of her own and she willingly erased her own personality to adopt that of Joe. She is still unsure of herself and not quite at ease with her adopted role. Later on she comes to see Jacob as Satan, tempting her to abandon her assumed personality. She sees him as not consistent, but as having nothing but ever-changing masks, donned one after the other as the situation demands. Following logically, she sees Joe as God: consistent, moral, and logically right. Over the battleground of Rennie, Jacob and Joe fight out their opposing points of view, Jacob with the shifting inconsistencies and limited goals of existentialism, Joe with his relative ethical values that denies any absolutes.

After Rennie and Jacob commit adultery, Barth abandons any consideration of Rennie and concentrates on the relationship between Jacob and Joe. The adultery had happened almost casually, while Joe was away. The seeds had been planted for it when Jacob and Rennie, peeking in on Joe after one of their rides, watched him making faces at himself in the mirror and engaging in a series of disgusting sex activities. Rennie is shattered; her god has his inconsistencies, too.

Rennie tells Joe of her infidelity and he confronts Jacob with it. Instead of behaving like an outraged husband, Joe

tries to find the reasons behind the deed. All Jacob can say is that he does not know why it happened. Joe's search for causes goes far beyond the point of believability so that one is forced to view it in abstract terms. Here, as elsewhere, Barth carries action to an extreme and exaggerated point until it becomes parody.

Jacob's relationship with Peggy Rankin is a parody of Joe's and Rennie's relationship. Both fail, Joe's because it is too intellectualized and Jacob's because it is too physical. Barth implies a middle way, one would assume, but he never says so directly. In fact, Barth provides no absolutes, but merely presents a set of actions. He seems to suggest that human involvement is the answer to the problems posed by nihilism.

Under Joe's urging, Rennie visits Jacob several more times. She tells him that she does not know whether she hates or loves Jacob, but she wants to find out. When both Rennie and Joe visit Jacob one evening, it is to tell him that Rennie is pregnant and that they do not know whose child it is. All she knows is that she will commit suicide if she cannot have an abortion. This situation drives Jacob to his hour of concern. Through a series of lies, impersonations, and gall, he convinces one of the local doctors to give Rennie something to make her abort. When he tells Rennie what he has done and that she must give a false name and story, she refuses. She would rather shoot herself than lie. Jacob, by his imperfect realization of his role and his readiness to assume all the responsibility, has become fully involved, but his commitment is the very thing that the Doctor had told him he must avoid. Joe also has failed in his personal absolutism by turning to Jacob for an answer.

In desperation, Jacob goes to the Doctor and asks him to perform an abortion. The Doctor finally agrees on the condition that Jacob will give him all his money and go with him to a new location in Pennsylvania. Jacob agrees and brings

Rennie to the Remobilization Farm. While on the operating table, Rennie dies.

Jacob is afraid that Joe will inform the police. Several days later he receives a telephone call from Joe, who tells him that he has taken care of everything. Joe and his convictions have suffered a mortal blow. He is lost and desperate. He turns to Jacob for an explanation, but Jacob has nothing to offer. Both positions, moral nihilism and ethical positivism, have been wrecked in their encounter with reality. Joe is left to reconstruct his life. Jacob returns to the Doctor because he is not

yet ready to assume the responsibilities of life.

The End of the Road is a bitter commentary on the plight of man. Barth, in his examination of nihilism, has given us no answers. There are no moments of high good humor, as in *The Sot-Weed Factor*, only an unrelieved pessimism. On the surface, the novel is akin to the theater of the absurd in its insistence on telling only the observable actions of a story. Barth points no morals and draws no conclusions, but only shows us that nihilism, in its several guises, is not an end in itself.

ENGLAND UNDER THE STUARTS

Type of work: History

Author: George Macaulay Trevelyan (1876-1962)

First published: 1904

Principal personages:

KING JAMES I

KING CHARLES I

KING CHARLES II

KING JAMES II

QUEEN ANNE

QUEEN MARY

WILLIAM OF ORANGE

OLIVER CROMWELL

The value of Trevelyan's *England Under the Stuarts* is not in its accuracy and its wealth of detail. Its special quality is its art. From the outset of his career Trevelyan wished to write history that was also literature, and he achieved his goal especially in this book.

He became a historian at a time when the claims of "scientific" history were ascendant. He says in his autobiography that he tried to be a traditional kind of historian, relating history to literature, against a current in the other direction. Indeed, he has a style that is a delight to read. He can combine and condense without losing touch with details. He is pleased to pause to give full treatment to the social scene, the landscape, and the character of the persons of his historical period. He informs his reader of purpose, motive, conclusion, and evaluation. These

qualities spring from his commitment to liberal democracy, and the reader feels Trevelyan's constant pleasure in watching the development of English Parliamentary government, humane law, and accomplishment in the arts that grace a civilization. It seems undoubtedly true that he played an important part in inspiring historians to write readable history without losing sight of factual accuracy.

The theme of *England Under the Stuarts* is the exploration of England's unique contribution to the history of the world, which came about through her dealings with the House of Stuart. For in a line of development directly contrary to what was happening elsewhere in Europe, England transferred sovereignty from the Crown to Parliament and thus laid the foundation for modern democratic government. Despotism, Trevelyan

says, was entrenched throughout Europe and would have determined the future but for the events in England during the seventeenth century.

To prepare the reader for these confrontations, Trevelyan skillfully sketches the social, economic, and religious life of the various classes in England in 1603, as James I rode from Scotland to take the English throne. He shows us manor house "high-vaulted dining halls . . . hung with tapestry, armour, weapons, and relics of the chase," hunting, duelling, manners and marriages, education, and religion (the rack, the stake, the burning town, and the massacre). He continues with accounts of the middle and lower classes, the open fields, the wilderness as yet unenclosed, disease, manufacturing, the growing towns.

He prepares us further by discussing Puritanism with thoroughness and clarity. He divides the Puritans into three groups: those who wished to modify customs of the Established Church, retaining bishops; "those who wished for Puritan coercion under a Presbyterian regime"; and "men who desired to abolish the coercive power of the church, whether Anglican or Presbyterian," allowing congregations to form freely.

The first of the great antagonists on the scene was James I, characterized by Trevelyan as a pedant, but human, whose defect was that he "couldn't tell a good man from a rogue, or a wise man from a fool." In the initial three years of his reign, says Trevelyan, King James set into motion the forces that were to drive two Stuart kings from the throne. In such perceptions and phrasings lies the special quality of Trevelyan's history. He views the century broadly and from a high perspective; he establishes a theme, and he frequently reminds his reader of the controlling motives and ideas of the period. Each action is related to the whole pattern. The Puritans petitioned James "not for supremacy, but for security," and James decided against them. "No Bishop, no King," he declared; "I will make them

conform themselves, or else will harry them out of the land." But when his Commons supported the Millenary Petition, the struggle was determined. That the alliance of Puritan and Commons was ominous was a matter disregarded by the king.

It is not necessary to detail the events of the century, Trevelyan's sure grasp of fact and theme reveals itself everywhere. His sentences encompass much. There is little documentation in the conventional sense of footnoting, yet evidence everywhere supports generalization. His summary powers can be shown at the conclusion of his chapters on James I. He notes how James, having allowed the debasement of the kingship, was now mocked in the taverns, so that "when at last the Puritan idealists rode out to battle against the King, they were followed by neighbors Pliable and Worldly-wiseman, who had come to imagine by force of long political sympathy that they themselves were Puritans."

When he comes to the climactic event of the century, the execution of King Charles I, though acknowledging that the Commission had no power and that Charles had committed no legal crime, Trevelyan nonetheless sees the action as the event that first ushered into the world of English politics "the sovereignty of the people and the equality of man with man." Yet the people themselves hardly yet knew the significance of the deed, and "when the bleeding head was held up," the multitude groaned. Thus the outrage postponed the kind of democratic success the leadership had hoped for. No man, not even Cromwell, could have held the Commonwealth permanently together, yet Trevelyan praises him for saving the political liberties of the people and for preventing the destruction of the free-thinkers and dissenters.

Trevelyan's narrative moves rapidly and smoothly everywhere, preparing us for such illuminating summary and interpretative passages as those already men-

tioned. Nor is he less effective in his treatment of the return of Charles II, or in his description of the social picture of the Restoration. This century of crowded events in England leaves little space for Trevelyan to discuss the settlement of the colonies in America—too little, considering that affairs on one continent were reflected on the other.

In 1665 and 1666 the Great Plague and the Great Fire struck London. The fire brought opportunities for rebuilding the outdated city. Not the least of these opportunities was the chance for the reconstruction of churches, wherein the artistry of Christopher Wren was expressed. Trevelyan finds further meaning in the effects of plague and fire. They influenced the atmosphere of politics "for twenty years to come," for they were interpreted superstitiously by the middle and lower classes, who thought them the result of "God's anger against their gover-

nors." Simultaneously, they also thought the fire to be the work of the Papists. Thus there was a resurgence of Puritanism not too long after it had suffered political defeat. There was also a temporary setback for rationalism. In this manner Trevelyan draws for us the complex pattern of history.

Then follow the Popish Plots, the terror, and the final flight of James II, completing the action set in motion eighty-five years earlier. In another fifty pages Trevelyan finishes the story of the century by discussing the reigns of Queen Anne and William and Mary. This extension allows him to conclude upon the note of a triumph of religious toleration, though he recognizes that religious equality was yet to come. The whole book is a model of achievement. One is everywhere impressed by the accomplishment of Trevelyan's announced tasks—to write cultural history in a literary manner.

THE ENGLISH NOTEBOOKS

Type of work: Journals

Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

First published: 1870; 1941

As a result of Nathaniel Hawthorne's close friendship with President Franklin Pierce for whom he had written a successful campaign biography, he was appointed United States Consul to Liverpool in 1853. Hawthorne eagerly anticipated his first trip abroad, although he hated to leave his pleasant home in Concord.

During the years Hawthorne was in England, 1853-1858, he did no creative writing, largely because he was too busy with his duties as consul and also because he spent much time touring England, Scotland, and Wales. But he did keep an extensive notebook of his English sojourn, and this journal of 300,000 words, comprising seven manuscript volumes, is what has come down to us as *The English Notebooks*.

The English Notebooks has had a

curious history. It was first published posthumously in 1870 as *Passages from the English Notebooks*, edited by Hawthorne's wife Sophia. But this edition was a bowdlerized version. To abide by standards of Victorian taste, Mrs. Hawthorne very carefully revised her husband's manuscripts, superimposing an aura of decorum on the whole book. She made stylistic revisions, deleting colloquialisms or substituting genteel language for Hawthorne's more commonplace terminology; she omitted passages in which mundane, unsavory, or crude subjects were treated; she withheld passages which were too harsh on England and on various English contemporaries of Hawthorne; and she struck out those which gave too personal an account of the Hawthorne family. Though Sophia's version of the journals was better than nothing,

obviously it cast deceptive shadows on the true personality of her husband.

It was not until the work of the late Randall Stewart that *The English Notebooks* was published in its authentic form. Stewart's edition, made possible by infrared light as well as his own deft scholarly judgment, gives us Hawthorne's own words and thereby not only gives us a more candid look at the author's view of England and its people but also presents us with a Hawthorne who is more human, more worldly in interests—in short, more alive—than the rather stolid personage of Sophia's rendition. The notebooks as edited by Stewart are now the standard edition.

The notebooks are not only a fascinating, detailed account of many aspects of England—its topography, the customs of its people, the splendors of its historic buildings—but also an important disclosure of a nineteenth century American's feelings toward England. Hawthorne's reaction to the mother country was in part unfavorable. As Professor Stewart points out in his introduction, such a bias was not uncommon among Americans of that day, for a strong patriotism augmented by the Revolution and the War of 1812 still lingered in this country. England was still something of a foe. Moreover, there was much supercilious criticism of America by the British in many English books and periodicals that criticized and satirized America and her customs. As a result, in the notebooks Hawthorne asserts America's superiority over England whenever he can. He writes of the superiority of American women over their "gross" English counterparts; he praises the common American man for knowing more of political happenings than the English countryman; he even feels American natural scenery, though not as richly verdant as that in England, is superior. He rarely wearies of lightly scoffing at the diminutive lakes, rivers, and mountains he sees in England. And he notes the relative lack of brooks and streams in England as

compared to those found in New England.

But there was also much about England that attracted Hawthorne. He loved the beauties of nature, such as the luxuriant hedge rows, and felt in some ways more akin to this mild, domesticated nature than to his own rugged New England terrain. His romantic appetite for old ruins in picturesque settings was also satisfied. Repeatedly he describes ivy-covered ruins and marvels over the hazy, antiquated atmosphere surrounding them. He also cherishes his visits to homes of famous deceased English authors.

The major attraction England held for Hawthorne, however, is less tangible than the others. Despite the statement he once made that New England was all his heart could hold, he was possessed by the haunting feeling of ancestral bondage to England. He had always had a keen sense of the past, a fact which is evident both in his fiction and in his inherent sense of guilt over the misguided role some of his ancestors had played in the Salem witchcraft trials. Being keenly conscious of ancestry and the past, Hawthorne felt that his going to England was in a way representative of the Hawthorne line returning to its original home, from which his forefathers had departed in 1635. The very thought of finding a gravestone there with his family name on it excited him. This theme of the ancestral tie appears throughout the notebooks and was later to be the subject of two of the fragmentary novels he left at his death. *The Ancestral Footstep* and *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*.

Thus, *The English Notebooks* shows Hawthorne's feelings toward England to be ambivalent. While criticizing many aspects of England, he also found much to admire in this land which held a mysterious claim on his affections.

Since Hawthorne made it a practice to make notebook entries of practically everything he noticed, it is impossible in a limited space to cover the wide range of material he included. But four major cat-

egories of his jottings may be distinguished and treated in some detail.

First, much of the notebooks is given over to detailed accounts of side trips which Hawthorne and his family took throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. There were the two visits to the Scottish Highlands, the leisurely tours of the Cumberland lake country, the excursions to such well-known attractions as Blenheim, and the frequent journeys to London. Second, and of necessity related to the first, there are many passages describing Hawthorne's visits to homes of famous deceased authors, among them Shakespeare, Scott, Dr. Johnson, and Southey and also encounters with illustrious English personages still living. Many of the latter occasions were simply brief meetings; others developed into fast friendships. He saw Macaulay at a dinner and Disraeli at the House of Commons, and he observed Tennyson at an art exhibition at Old Trafford but was too shy to introduce himself to the redoubtable poet laureate. He became friends, however, with Leigh Hunt, a "beautiful and venerable" old man, and especially with Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The Hawthornes' friendship with the Brownings was to continue into their Italian days, from 1858 to 1860.

The third category of Hawthorne's recordings in the notebooks is directly related to his published writings. Although he wrote no fiction during his years in England, he was laying the groundwork for later creative work. In the first place, his later collection of essays on England, *Our Old Home*, borrowed heavily from his notebook entries. Such essays as "Leamington Spa," "Lichfield and Uttoxeter," and "Outside Glimpses of English Poverty" closely followed his notebook accounts.

Moreover, many of the observations recorded in the notebooks were later used in *The Marble Faun* and the fragmentary novels, *The Ancestral Footstep*, *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*, *Septimius Felton*, and *The Dolliver Romance*. For

example, an attractive, exotic-looking Jewess Hawthorne observed at the Lord Mayor's banquet in 1856 became the prototype for the enigmatic Miriam of *The Marble Faun*. An imprint in stone somewhat resembling a footprint at Smithell's Hall, said to be that of a Protestant martyr who stamped his foot in protest against religious injustice during Bloody Mary's reign, became the germ of *The Ancestral Footstep*. Fascinated by the way moss on English tombstones served to bring out the inscriptions and thereby prolong the memory of the deceased, Hawthorne used this phenomenon in both *Septimius Felton* and *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*. A venerable yew tree which Hawthorne observed in a churchyard at Eastham was later used in *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* as a symbol of the lingering influence of the past on the present. The luxuriant English gardens seemed to Hawthorne to tempt man to withdraw from life and seclude himself in their protective sanctuaries, an idea he later introduced into his unfinished novels. A rare flower, supposedly everlasting, presented to Sophia by a gardener at the hot houses at Eaton Hall became a symbol of earthly immortality in *Septimius Felton* and *The Dolliver Romance*. In short, the notebooks are a storehouse of raw materials which Hawthorne molded into characters, settings, plot elements, and symbols in his later fiction.

Finally, and perhaps ultimately most important, *The English Notebooks* reveals Hawthorne the man. Lurking in the shadows is Hawthorne the romancer; but in the limelight is the man who loved playing parlor games with his family on cold winter nights, who longed to smoke a cigar with Tennyson, who was simultaneously aroused and repulsed by the sensuous Jewess, who performed his mundane duties of the consulate with diligence yet weariness, and who was moved by the grandeur of English cathedrals but felt strong yearnings for the simpler church services of his Puritan heritage stirring within him. This is the Haw-

thorne who emerges from the notebooks, a rich portrait which belies the dated pic-

ture of him as a brooding, almost unworldly recluse.

THE EPIGRAMS OF MELEAGER

Type of work: Epigrams

Author: Meleager (c. 140-c. 70 B.C.)

First transcribed: First century B.C.

Meleager is one of the few surviving voices in Greek literature from the early first century B.C. This century, so rich in Roman literature, was perhaps the scantiest of all the classical period for Greek. One's sense of dearth is intensified by the kind of literature which survived. Ancient Greek literature at no time produced seriously realistic writing, and when the mythical core vanished, the remains took the form of history, philosophy, or stereotyped, artificial styles such as New Comedy, Romance, and Epigram. So it is that in this unsettled century, when the details of personality and daily existence would have been so fascinating, the chief creative writer transmits to us some one hundred thirty epigrams consisting chiefly of picturesque variations on standard themes and topics of earlier epigrammatic love poets. The incongruity is all the keener from the fact that Meleager's home until manhood was Gadara in Syria, the very town at which Jesus was to cast devils into swine. These two Semitic figures, when juxtaposed in the imagination, are utterly immiscible, as are the styles of their literary remains.

Meleager might be for us somewhat less the hothouse orchid he is if his juvenilia had been preserved. His earliest writings were satirical dialogues in prose, modeled on the writings of Menippus, the famous Cynic philosopher and teacher at Gadara. Something of their character may be sensed from the later dialogues of Lucian. The subject of one is reported as a comparison of pease-porridge with lentil-soup. But these were lost, and Meleager's remains now consist of the epigrams found in the great collection known as the *Greek Anthology*.

The last of Meleager's literary productions was itself one of the early stages in the development of that anthology: his *Stephanos* (usually translated *Garland*) was a collection of epigrams of some fifty poets, himself included, with a famous verse preface which compares each poet to that flower which most suggests his poetic character. Later anthologists included the *Stephanos* in larger gatherings; the final collection (apart from the additions derived from Planudes) was made in the tenth century. The poetically significant sections of that collection are the love poems, dedicatory inscriptions, epitaphs, declamatory, moralizing, convivial, and satiric epigrams. Only about twenty of Meleager's epigrams, however, are to be found outside the love poems.

There is a tendency in the anthology, even within the major sections, to arrange poems on the same theme in a sequence. This tendency provides the most important clue for the appreciation of Meleager. The innocent reader on first encounter is likely to ascribe to Meleager both a hectic variety of erotic liaisons and a continuous intensity of emotion reflected in the extravagant language both of which in fact distract the reader from the true poetic center of most of the epigrams. The poems are best approached as exercises in various types, attempts at overbidding previous treatments of a topic—overbidding in wit, imagery, and rhetoric. (The case is similar to that of such poets as Herrick and Jonson, many of whose short lyrics are adaptations or emulations of Anacreon, Catullus, and the *Greek Anthology* itself.) To illustrate, here is an epigram by the earlier poet Asclepiades (XII, 166):

Let this that is left of my soul, whatever it be, let this at least, ye Loves, have rest for heaven's sake. Or else no longer shoot me with arrows but with thunderbolts, and make me utterly into ashes and cinders. Yea! yea! strike me, ye Loves; for withered away as I am by distress, I would have from you, If I may aught, this little gift.

Meleager takes up the notion of the incinerated lover and exploits it in various ways. For instance (XII, 74):

I am down; set thy foot on my neck, fierce demon. I know thee, yea by the gods, yea heavy art thou to bear: I know, too, thy fiery arrows. But if thou set thy torch to *my* heart, thou shalt no longer burn it; already it is all ash.

If I perish, Cleobulus (for cast, nigh all of me, into the flame of lads' love, I lie, a burnt remnant, in the ashes), I pray thee make the urn drunk with wine ere thou lay it in earth, writing thereon, "Love's gift to Death."

The practice of poetry-as-outcapping comes all the more naturally to Meleager in that he was part of the wave of rhetorical fashion known as the Asianic. Meleager was a Syrian, but Oriental race or culture has nothing to do with Asianism, which is purely a development within classical literature. The Asianic style sought for something like the Baroque: extravagance in diction and imagery, special tricks and effects in word arrangements. Most of this is hard to illustrate outside the Greek, but the use of repetition and fancy compounds in the following may give some of the flavor (VII, 476, 1-4):

Tears, the last gift of my love, even down through the earth I send to thee in Hades, Heliodora—tears ill to shed, and on thy much-wept tomb I pour them in memory of longing, in memory of affection.

The witty side of Meleager's Asianism brings him close at times to the Metaphysicals' conceits (V, 156):

Love-loving Asclepias, with her clear blue eyes, like summer seas, persuadeth all to make the love-voyage.

None of the foregoing is meant to deny the existence of genuine emotion in Meleager's poetry. The point is that, where emotion is found, it emerges from, launches, or sets on fire the already existing framework of artificial craft, and artifice is inseparable from the result. In various ways, of course, the same can be said of all poetry, but it is so dominant in Meleager (and other epigrammatists) that it needs special emphasis as a defining characteristic.

As for the quality of the emotional experience in those few poems where emotion is genuinely present, this is no place for a full disquisition on the Meleagrian species of "Love in the Western World." J. W. Mackail has spoken of a mystical, almost medieval strain in Meleager's love poetry. The religious aspect is overstated in this judgment, but there is one way in which Meleager does at times approach a medieval quality: more than the other epigrammatists, he expresses the total subjection, abasement, humiliation of the lover, much as the courtly lover of the Middle Ages conceived himself as the abject servant of his lady (XII, 158, 1-2):

The goddess, queen of the Desires, gave me to thee, Theocles; Love, the soft-sandalled, laid me low for thee to tread on . . .

Along with the intermittent intensity of his passion, however, there is an element of coyness and sentimentality which pervades Meleager as well as most of the other love-epigrammatists of the *Greek Anthology*, an element absent from the love of poetry of the Lyric Age of Greece (c. 700-500 B.C.), absent even from Anacreon. Perhaps it is possible to account for the change by the fact that the period was Hellenistic, not Hellenic. The great love poetry is written when Eros is integrated within or demonically opposed to a religious framework, and for most educated men of the Hel-

lenistic Age there was no serious religion, only philosophy.

One other feature of Meleager's love poetry which needs simply to be noted, at least for contemporary readers, is the characteristic type of the beloved. Meleager's loved ones fall exclusively into two classes: hetaerae (professional female entertainers or courtesans) and boys in their early teens. Since these two classes account for practically all extant ancient Greek love poetry (Sappho is the major exception), this otherwise rather striking phenomenon needs no special discussion in connection with Meleager.

One should not over-emphasize Meleager as a love poet; nor should one be concerned with seeking out those poems which embody "genuine passion," as if these must necessarily be his best. Sheer flights of linguistic dexterity and brilliant variations of traditional themes can produce fine epigrams. Perhaps the most memorable characteristic of Meleager is

an outgrowth of this side of his poetry; his bursts of wit often have an element of sheer playfulness and tender humor. In one poem he sends forth a gnat on the dangerous Herculean mission of rousing Heliodora from the side of her current lover to bring her back: the reward will be Hercules' club and lion skin. In another he asks the dew-drunk cicada to strum in antiphon with Pan's piping at high noon and lull him to sleep. An epigraph he wrote for himself makes fun of his own garrulity. In all this one can see a survival of the Meleager who wrote on pease-porridge and lentil-soup.

Meleager's *oeuvre* is a curious mixture of the complex and the trivial, the passionate and the sophisticated. Connoisseurs of the cameo, exquisites of the Yellow Nineties are *ex officio* licensed to cherish his work; all others will have done him sufficient justice if they read him, at judicious intervals, as an interesting minor poet.

THE EPISTLES OF HORACE

Type of work: Letters in verse

Author: Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65-8 B.C.)

First transcribed: Book One, c. 19 B.C.; Book Two, c. 13 B.C.

The close and intimate life of the Greek city state gave rise to most of the literary forms of ancient literature, the greater number of which were adopted and adapted by the Romans. However, the epistle, the letter in verse, was a Roman literary invention brought to perfection by Horace during the first days of the Roman imperial period. With Rome administering most of the known world, friends would often be separated in different parts of the empire for years, and even if a citizen remained in Italy he would often, as did Horace, retire to his country estate. Letter writing became not merely a matter of occasional necessity, but often the only means of communication, and it was natural that poets and men of letters should turn the epistle into a literary form so that even at a distance

friends could share both poetry and, in some measure, epistolary conversation.

Horace's epistles were published in two books; the first, containing twenty letters, appeared about 20 or 19 B.C.; the second, containing two long letters, probably appeared in 13 B.C. Some scholars argue that the second book of epistles should contain the famous *Epistle to the Pisos*, the *Ars Poetica*. However, this work has traditionally been published separately.

In his first book, Horace is a moralist; in the second, a literary critic. The shorter epistles in the first book, some less than fifteen lines long, are familiar and intimate; one need not doubt that they were written as letters first and poems second. In these shorter letters we see Horace, a man of forty-five who claims his days of writing lyric poetry are fin-

ished, interested in the writing of the younger generation, inviting a friend to dinner, or the like. The longer epistles of the first book, however, are much more formal and tend to the didactic; they smack of the *tour de force*, and while they may well have been sent to the persons to whom they are addressed, they read more like open letters to the poet's entire audience. Typical of these longer letters, and setting the moral tone of the first book, is Epistle One, addressed to the poet's friend and patron, Maecenas. In it the poet bids farewell to poetry and states that in his declining years he will devote himself to philosophic inquiry. But he will be an eclectic, limiting his speculation to the precepts of no one school of philosophy, for his interest is to find what is ultimately and lastingly profitable for the achievement of virtue. The calm pursuit of wisdom, he states, is the highest good, not the frantic pursuit of things. Showing himself to be as much a Stoic as anything else, he claims the secret of happiness is not to value anything too much. Other matters he speaks of in the first epistle are the need to control the passions so as not to ruin enjoyment, the need to train one's character, and the need to adapt oneself to both company and oneself alone. Horace's wish from life, he concludes, is enough books and enough food to keep him comfortable.

With the tone thus set, Horace proceeds to write of the following matters in the successive epistles of the first book. Epistle Two, to Lollius, begins with the old doctrine that important moral lessons are to be learned from the study of Homer. Horace quickly turns to his real subject, however, which is the foolishness of putting off or not exerting the effort requisite for moral self-improvement. Epistle Three, to Julius Florus, was written to a friend who was abroad campaigning with Claudius; the poet inquires about other young friends on Claudius' staff. He is particularly interested in their literary activity. Epistle Four, to Tibullus, the poet, is a short note of warm

friendship in which Horace gently recommends the Epicurean idea that one should live each day as if it were his last. Epistle Five to Torquatus is an invitation to a frugal but cheerful and friendly dinner party. Epistle Six, to Numicius, is a lay sermon on the famous Horatian phrase, *Nil admirari*, "wonder at nothing." The wise man should love nothing but virtue: live, and be happy. Epistle Seven, to Maecenas, is a note of appreciation for various favors. Horace apologizes for absenting himself from Rome for so long, and he uses the occasion to describe the ideal giver and, with some humor, the ideal receiver. Self-sufficiency, he claims, is preferable to all other blessings. Epistle Eight, to Celsus Albivanus, is a letter to a member of Tiberius' staff. The poet describes his own ill health and admonishes Celsus to bear up well under prosperity. Epistle Nine, to Claudius Tiberius Nero, is a graceful letter of recommendation for Horace's friend Septimus. Epistle Ten, to Aristius Fuscus, praises the superiority of country life as being more conducive to the contented mind and more favorable to liberty of spirit than the city life of Fuscus.

Epistle Eleven, to Bullatus, is an attempt to call this friend back to Rome from Asia, where he has retired because of his despair over the civil wars. Happiness, Horace says, is not in travel but in the mind and is to be achieved anywhere or nowhere. Epistle Twelve, to Iccius, ironically ridicules miserliness, introduces a friend, and gives news of recent events in the empire. Epistle Thirteen, to Vinicius Asina, cautions Asina, Horace's emissary, to present certain of Horace's writings to Augustus at a propitious and proper moment, and with due decorum. Epistle Fourteen chastises the caretaker of his farm, to whom the letter is written, for missing city life. Horace briefly reminisces about his wild younger years and then advises the wisdom of contentment. Epistle Fifteen, to C. Numonius Vala, asks about the situation and conditions of the town of Velia, where Horace has

been advised by his physician to take a cure. Again he comments on country life. Epistle Sixteen, to Quinctius, describes the situation and advantages of Horace's Sabine farm. His description is detailed enough that its position can be determined. The poet goes on to philosophize on the nature of true virtue and the self-sufficiency and freedom of the virtuous man. Epistle Seventeen, to Scaeva, is a letter of advice to one who would seek advantage by frequenting the company of the great. The friendship of the great, the poet says is a good thing, but one must always solicit favors from them with modesty and caution. Epistle Eighteen, to Lollius, in a more elaborate way treats of the same topic as the seventeenth. Horace discusses the tact and discretion a client of the great must have; he concludes with remarks concerning peace of mind, a quality difficult to achieve when one depends on the favor of the great. Epistle Nineteen, to Maecenas, is a review of the poet's literary career; he decries the folly of slavish imitation, and he attacks his detractors. Epistle Twenty, addressed to his book, is developed as an argument between the poet and his now completed first book of epistles. The book is spoken to as if it were a young slave, a favorite of his master, who wants to be sold out of a quiet country household and into an exciting city house where he can seek advancement. Horace explains all the troubles and chances he must undergo. He ends the poem with remarks on what he expects from posterity. The tone of the nineteenth and twentieth epistles implies that the poet is finished now with his writing career.

The impression we receive from these twenty letters is that middle-aged Horace is feeling old and is in delicate health, and that he will write no more. Perhaps he really did believe he was through with poetry; however, he still had a few more poems to write, and among them, of course, were the two long discourses on literature (companion pieces, in effect, to

the *Ars Poetica*) that make up the second volume of epistles.

The first of these two letters is to Augustus. After first paying the emperor the highest kind of compliments, Horace plunges into a consideration of the current state of literature. First he intervenes in the then raging Roman "battle of the ancients and the moderns." He acknowledges the greatness of the earlier Greek poets, but he wants to have the early Latin poets respected more than they usually are. Horace sketches out the history of Latin poetry from the beginnings up through the Greeks "capture" of their captor, Rome, and then on to his own day. Looking at the present state of letters, Horace judges (and history shows him to have been quite correct) that the drama would not reach great heights in Rome: the taste of the people was for spectacle, mimes, and elaborate staging. But non-dramatic poetry, he thinks will do very well; for Augustus, whose taste is impeccable, will encourage poetry and will not be deceived by second-rate poets.

The second epistle of the last book is to Julius Florus, a friend of the poet who apparently wanted also to be a poet. This letter is much more personal in tone than the letter to Augustus and is full of intimate detail. Horace begins by testifying that he is rather lazy and undependable now that he no longer must write poetry in order to stay alive, as he did when he was young. Moreover, poetry is one of the follies of the young and, now that he is growing old, he must give it up as he has his other youthful pastimes. How, he asks, can a man write real poetry amidst the hustle and bustle and distractions of Rome? The real poet must live and write in the quiet countryside. The poets who stay in the city form worthless mutual admiration societies out of which comes no true criticism. A good poet is a good critic too, and he can take and use valid criticism of his own work. Bad poets hate criticism of any kind. Perhaps the happiest writer is the madman who writes very

badly, but who thinks he writes divinely. At any rate, Horace concludes, at his age it is proper to think of gaining happiness,

which is found in calm and content, not wealth.

AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: John Dryden (1631-1700)

First published: 1668

Principal characters:

CRITES, a sharp-tongued gentleman, a stanch classicist

EUGENIUS, a defender of the English theater of his own time

LISIDEIUS, a devotee of the French classical drama

NEANDER, representative of the author, a lover of the great Elizabethans

The period after the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne is notable in English literary history as an age in which criticism flourished, probably in no small part as a result of the emphasis on neoclassical rules of art in seventeenth century France, where many of Charles' courtiers and literati had passed the years of Cromwell's rule. John Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is an exposition of several of the major critical positions of the time, set out in a semi-dramatic form that gives life to the abstract theories.

Dryden sets his discussion in June, 1665 during a naval battle between England and the Netherlands. Four cultivated gentlemen, Eugenius, Lisideius, Crites and Neander, have taken a barge down the Thames to observe the combat, and, as guns sound in the background, they comment on the sorry state of modern literature; this naval encounter will inspire hundreds of bad verses commending the victors or consoling the vanquished. Crites laments that his contemporaries will never equal the standard set by the Greeks and the Romans. Eugenius, more optimistic, disagrees and suggests that they pass the remainder of the day debating the relative merits of classical and modern literature. He proposes that Crites choose one literary genre for comparison and initiate the discussion.

As Crites begins his defense of the classical drama, he mentions one point

which is accepted by all the others: drama is, as Aristotle wrote, an imitation of life, and it is successful as it reflects human nature clearly. He also discusses the three unities, rules dear to both the classicist and the neoclassicist, requiring that a play take place in one locale, during one day, and that it encompass one, and only one, action or plot.

Crites contends that modern playwrights are but pale shadows of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Seneca, and Terence. The classical dramatists not only followed the unities successfully; they also used language more skillfully than their successors. He calls to witness Ben Jonson, the Elizabethan dramatist most highly respected by the neoclassical critics, a writer who borrowed copiously from many of the classical authors and prided himself on being a modern Horace: "I will use no further argument to you than his example: I will produce before you Father Ben, dressed in all the ornaments and colours of the ancients; you will need no other guide to our party, if you follow him."

Eugenius pleads the cause of the modern English dramatists, not by pointing out their virtues, but by criticizing the faults of the classical playwrights. He objects to the absence of division by acts in the works of the latter, as well as to the lack of originality in their plots. Tragedies are based on threadbare myths famil-

iar to the whole audience; comedies revolve around hackneyed intrigues of stolen heiresses and miraculous restorations. A more serious defect is these authors' disregard of poetic justice: "Instead of punishing vice and rewarding virtue, they have often shown a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety."

Pointing to scenes from several plays, Eugenius notes the lack of tenderness in classical drama. Crites grants Eugenius his preference, but he argues that each age has its own modes of behavior; Homer's heroes were "men of great appetites, lovers of beef broiled upon the coals, and good fellows," while the principal characters of modern French romances "neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, for love."

Lisideius takes up the debate on behalf of the French theater of the early seventeenth century. The French classical dramatists, led by Corneille, were careful observers of the unities, and they did not attempt to combine tragedy and comedy, an English practice which he finds absurd: "Here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, and a third of honour and a duel: thus, in two hours and a half, we run through all the fits of Bedlam."

The French playwrights are so attentive to poetic justice that when they base their plots on historical events they alter the original situations to mete out just reward and punishment. The French dramatist "so interweaves truth with probable fiction that he puts a pleasing fallacy upon us; mends the intrigues of fate, and dispenses with the severity of history, to reward that virtue which has been rendered to us there unfortunate." Plot, as the preceding comments might suggest, is of secondary concern in these plays. The dramatist's chief aim is to express appropriate emotions; violent action always takes place off stage, and it is generally reported by a messenger.

Just as Eugenius devoted much of his discussion to refuting Crites' arguments, Neander, whose views are generally Dry-

den's own, contradicts Lisideius' claims for the superiority of the French drama. Stating his own preference for the works of English writers, especially of the great Elizabethans, Neander suggests that it is they who best fulfill the primary requirement of drama, that it be "an imitation of life." The beauties of the French stage are, to him, cold; they may "raise perfection higher where it is, but are not sufficient to give it where it is not." He compares these beauties to those of a statue, flawless, but without a soul. Intense human feeling is, Neander feels, an essential part of drama.

Neander argues that tragi-comedy is the best form for drama, for it is the closest to life; emotions are heightened by contrast, and both mirth and sadness are more vivid when they are set side by side. He believes, too, that subplots enrich a play; he finds the French drama, with its single action, thin. Like Samuel Johnson, who defended Shakespeare's disregard of the unities, Dryden suggests that close adherence to the rules prevents dramatic depth. Human actions will be more believable if there is time for the characters' emotions to develop. Neander sees no validity in the argument that changes of place and time in plays lessen dramatic credibility; the theatergoer knows that he is in a world of illusion from the beginning, and he can easily accept leaps in time and place, as well as makeshift battles.

Concluding his comparison of French and English drama, Neander characterizes the best of the Elizabethan playwrights. His judgments have often been quoted for their perceptivity. He calls Shakespeare "the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul." Beaumont and Fletcher are praised for their wit and for their language, whose smoothness and polish Dryden considers their greatest accomplishment: "I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection."

Dryden commends Ben Jonson for his

learning and judgment, for his "correctness," yet he feels that Shakespeare surpassed him in "wit," by which he seems to mean something like natural ability or inspiration. This discussion ends with the familiar comparison: "Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare."

Neander concludes his argument for the superiority of the Elizabethans with a close critical analysis of Jonson's *The Silent Woman*, which he believes a perfect demonstration that the English were capable of following classical rules triumphantly. Dryden's allegiance to the neo-classical tradition is clear here; Samuel Johnson could disparage the unities in his *Preface to Shakespeare*, but Dryden, even as he refuses to be a slave to the rules, makes Jonson's successful observance of them his decisive argument.

The essay closes with a long discussion of the value of rhyme in plays. Crites feels that blank verse, as the poetic form nearest prose, is most suitable for drama, while Neander favors rhyme, which encourages succinctness and clarity. He believes that the Restoration dramatists can make their one claim to superiority through their development of the heroic couplet. Dryden is very much a man of his time in this argument; the modern reader who has suffered through the often empty declamation of the Restoration hero returns with relief to the blank verse of the Elizabethans.

Dryden ends his work without a real conclusion; the barge reaches its destination, the stairs at Somerset House, and the debate is, of necessity, over. Moving with the digressions and contradictions of a real conversation, the discussion has provided a clear, lively picture of many of the literary opinions of Dryden's time.

ESSAY ON CRITICISM

Type of work: Verse essay

Author: Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

First published: 1711

Published when Alexander Pope was twenty-two years old, the *Essay on Criticism* remains one of the best known discussions of literary criticism, of its ends and means, in our language. It stands today the source of numerous familiar epigrams known to the reading public. Pope was very young when he wrote the work; existing evidence points to 1708 or 1709 as the probable period of composition. Pope wrote of its composition: "The things that I have written fastest, have always pleased the most. I wrote the *Essay on Criticism* fast; for I had digested all the matter in prose, before I began upon it in verse." Although Pope may seem to rely too heavily upon the authority of the ancient authors as literary masters, he certainly recognizes, as many readers fail to note, the "grace beyond the reach of art" which no model can teach.

True genius and judgment are innate gifts of heaven, as Pope says, but many do possess the seeds of taste and judgment that, with proper training, may flourish. The genius of the ancients cannot be imitated but their principles may be. The poem is structured in three parts: the general qualities of a critic; the particular laws by which he judges a work; and the ideal character of a critic.

Part I opens with Pope's indictment of the false critic. He remarks that as poets may be prejudiced about their own merits, so critics can be partial to their own judgment. Judgment, or "True Taste," derives like the poet's genius from nature, but nature provides everyone with some taste, which if not perverted by a poor education or other defects, may enable the critic to judge properly. The first job of the critic then is to know himself, his

own judgment, tastes, abilities; in short, to know his personal limitations.

The second task of the critic is to know Nature, which is his standard as it is the poet's. Nature is defined ambiguously as

Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal
light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to all im-
part,
At once the source, and end, the test of
Art.

Nature thus becomes a universal or cosmic force, an ideal sought by poet and critic alike in the general scheme, things universally approved throughout history by all men. This ideal must be apprehended by the critic through his judicious balance of wit and judgment, of imaginative invention and deliberative reason.

The rules of literary criticism may best be located in those works that have stood the test of time and universal approbation, the works of antiquity. From the ancient authors critics have derived rules of art that are not self-imposed at the whim of the critic, but are discovered justly operating in the writings of the best authors. Such rules are "Nature still, but Nature methodized."

Formerly critics did restrict themselves to discovering rules in classical literature; now, however, critics stray from the principles of these earlier critics whose motive was solely to make art "more beloved," and prescribe their own rules, which are pedantic, unimaginative, and basely critical of literature. Thus what was once a subordinate sister to creative art now replaces or turns against its superior, assuming a higher place in the order of things. Criticism, once destined to teach the "world . . . to admire" the poet's art, today presumes to be master.

The true critic must learn thoroughly the ancients, particularly Homer and Vergil, for "To copy nature is to copy them." But there are beauties of art

which cannot be taught by rules; these intangible beauties are the "nameless graces which no methods teach/And which a master-hand alone can reach." But modern writers should avoid transcending, unless rarely, the rules of art first established by the great men of the past.

Part II traces the causes hindering good judgment—that chief virtue of a true critic. Pope advises the critic to avoid the dangers of blindness caused by pride, the greatest source of poor judgment, by learning his own defects and by profiting even from the strictures of his enemies. Inadequate learning is another reason a critic errs: "A little learning is a dangerous thing;/Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring." Or if a critic looks too closely at the parts of a poem, he may find himself preferring a poem dull as a whole yet perfect in parts to one imperfect in part but pleasing as a whole. It is the unity of the many small parts in one whole that affects us: "'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,/But the joint force and full result of all." Art without any fault at all, moreover, can never be. And finally, any critic errs who condemns a work for failing to achieve that which its author never intended: in short, "regard the writer's End,/Since none can compass more than they intend."

As some critics deviate from nature in judging "by a love to parts," others confine their attention to conceits, images, or metaphors. Poets who dissimulate their want of art with a wild profusion of imagery have not learned to control their imagination; they overvalue mere decoration and paint, not "the naked nature and the living grace," but the external variables of nature. "True Wit," Pope says, "is Nature to advantage dressed,/What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."

Other critics too highly praise style and language without respect for content; true eloquence clarifies and improves the thought, revealing nature at her finest, but "False Eloquence" imposes a veil

upon the face of nature, obscuring with its finery the truths of nature. Proper expression, in addition, should fit with the content; the poet should never attempt to lend false dignity by archaic words. Proper diction is neither too old nor too modern.

Most false critics judge by meter, criticizing according to the roughness or smoothness of the verse. Overfondness for metrics results in the dull clichés of poetry, such as "the cooling western breeze," and the like. Pope avers that rough or smooth verse should not be the poet's ideal; he should aim rather to fit the sound to the sense

Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently
blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother
numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sound-
ing shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like a
torrent roar.

Lines 344-383 of the poem constitute a digression by Pope to illustrate "representative meter."

The true critic generally abides by rules of tolerance and aloofness from extremes of fashion and personal taste. The critic who indulges in petty predilections for certain schools or kinds of poets sacrifices his objectivity. Be a patron of no separate group, whether ancient or modern, foreign or native, Pope advises. The critic should pledge himself to truth, not to passing cults. Nor should a critic fear to advance his own judgment merely because the public favors other poets and schools; no critic should echo fashion or let a writer's name influence him. Especially reprehensible is that critic who derives his opinions about literature from lords of quality.

The final pitfall of the false critic is subjectivity, measuring by personal preferences. Private or public envy may distort one's evaluation. The critic must put aside personal motives and praise accord- ing to less personal criteria. Nor should

the critic be led astray by self-love: "Good-nature and good-sense must ever join." A critic may justly vent his spleen upon more worthy targets, of which many exist in "these flagitious times." Obscenity, dullness, immodesty: all should concern the critic and receive his lash. But the vices of an age should not infect a critic's judgment on other mat- ters.

Finally, Part III outlines the ideal character of a critic. It lists rules for his manners and contrasts the ideal critic with the "incorrigible poet" and "impertinent Critic," concluding with a brief summary of literary criticism and the character of the best critics.

It is not enough for the critic to know, Pope writes; he must also share the quali- ties of a good man, worthy of respect not only for his intellect but also for his char- acter. Integrity stands at the head of a list of good qualities for a critic. Modesty that forbids both unseemly outspokenness and rigid adherence to erroneous opinion, tact that supports truth without alienat- ing by bluntness, and courage that fears not to pursue truth despite censure are important attributes for the true critic. But as some dull and foolish poets are best not maligned for fear of provoking them to greater folly, so the critic full of pedantry and impertinence should be ig- nored. Nothing is too sacred for the learned fool, who rushes in "where An- gels fear to tread." The true critic is one "Still pleased to teach, and yet not proud to know." Such a man has knowledge both "of books and human kind."

Having outlined the characteristics of true critics, Pope catalogues the most fa- mous critics, "the happy few" of Greece and Rome: Aristotle, Horace, Dionysius, Quintilian, Longinus. Aristotle, "Who conquered Nature" respected by the poets as the lawgiver; Horace, who "still charms with graceful negligence"; Quin- tilian's "justest rules, and clearest method": such are the true critics who flourished along with the great empires of their nations. With the fall of the empire

came the fall of learning, enslavement of mind and body. Erasmus stemmed the barbarian's reign of ignorance and Boileau of France signified the advancement of critical learning in Europe. Except for

the Duke of Buckinghamshire's *Essay on Poetry*, England despises and remains untouched by the return to the "juster ancient cause."

ESSAY ON MAN

Type of work: Philosophical verse essay

Author: Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

First published: 1733-1734

Pope's *Essay on Man* stands as the intellectual landmark of the eighteenth century because it embodies the cosmological, theological, and ethical thought of its age. Heavily influenced by Pope's friend Lord Bolingbroke, whose philosophy was congenial to Pope, the *Essay on Man* actually sums up the leading principles of the time, principles whose origins may be traced to Plato, Aristotle, Leibnitz, and others, but which were commonplace ideas by Pope's day. Arthur Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* provides the essential background for a thorough understanding of the traditions upon which Pope drew.

The central conception of this poem rests, however, upon the ideas of plenitude, gradation, and continuity. Plenitude, for Pope, meant the overwhelming fullness of creation, of a universe inhabited by all possible essences created by God out of His own goodness. The abundance and variety of creation is also marked by gradation, the notion that there exists a graduated chain or rank among creation, moving from the lowest created thing up to God. This chain implies, of course, subordination of lower creatures to higher because each step up the ladder marks a slight variation upon the preceding step. Thus man is superior by virtue of his reason to lower beings. The ordered harmony of the entire creation depends upon the proper ordering of parts. Continuity, this ordered continuum of creation, is for Pope the principle of social and divine love which ties

together all forms of creation in measured rule.

Epistle I explains the relationship of man to the universe. Man's knowledge of the universe must be limited to this world only; however, because evil exists on earth, we should not question God's ways or His justice. It is enough to know that God, because of His infinite goodness, created a perfect system and that man is merely a small part of the gigantic whole. God created the universe in one vast chain; somewhere along this chain man's place may be found. The imperfections in his nature man pretends to find are not really imperfections, for God created man suited to his place and rank in creation. Our happiness here consists in two things: our ignorance of the future and our hope for better things in the future. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast:/Man never Is, but always to be blest."

Man's chief error is his pride which causes him to aspire to be better than he is, to question Providence about the fitness of things. Such pride inverts the real order since we are the judged, not the judges. We must not presume to doubt the justice of God's dispensations. Another error is that man sees himself wrongly as the final cause of all creation, as though all nature exists to serve him alone.

Equally unjust is our wish for the strength of wild beasts or the power of angels, because God made the earth and all its inhabitants in a graduated scale; at

the bottom are the lowest of creatures, man stands in the middle, and above men are multitudes of angels and, finally, God.

Vast chain of Being! which from God
began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye
can see,
No glass can reach; from Infinite to
thee,
From thee to Nothing.

Each animal is subordinated to the ranks above and superior to those below. Man, by virtue of his reason, rules all creation below, but he is not of ethereal substance, as an angel is, and does not possess angelic power. Therefore it is absurd to claim another's place since each is a part of the whole ordained by God. To break this vast chain at any point would destroy the whole and violate God's plan. Man should not view creation as imperfect because he can envision only a part of it. His middle place on the scale implies a limited perception of the complete plan, and what he sees as evil is actually from God's larger vision, partial evil contributing ultimately to His universal good.

All partial Evil, universal Good:
And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's
spite,
One truth is clear, **WHATEVER IS,
IS RIGHT.**

Epistle II discusses the nature and state of man as an individual whose tragic situation is that he is in this middle state, both god and beast, both spirit and body. In human nature two principles, self-love and reason, operate often at odds with one another. Neither is entirely good or bad; when each does its function properly and works in conjunction with the other, good results occur. Pope compares these two principles to the mechanism of a watch; within men self-love is the spring, reason the balance wheel. Without one man could not act; without the other action would be aimless. Without self-love men would vegetate; without reason men

would consume themselves in lawless passion. Self-love motivates, inspires, while reason checks, advises. Self-love judges by present good and reason by future consequences. Reason through time acquires power to control impulsive self-love.

The passions are modes of self-love good as long as they conform to reason's dictates. One, the Ruling Passion, often dominates all others and determines the character of a man. No virtue arising from any passion can be wholly without value if subdued, as lust may be turned to gentle love, anger to zeal.

Although man contains both vice and virtue, Heaven compensates by converting individual defects into the strength of all. Our weaknesses motivate mutual reliance. And since each man is given his due portion of happiness and misery no one should wish to exchange his state for another's. Each should rest content with his own lot.

Epistle III discusses the role of man in society. Pope sees the whole universe as one comprehensive society, a complex system of interrelations cementing all creation. Each part relates to others but rank in the chain of being confers power and control over inferior ranks. But with rule comes responsibility, and man, the imperial race, must care for his underlings as God cares for him.

Whether ruled by animal instinct or human reason each enjoys that power best suited to his place. Although God set the necessary bounds to each species, allotting to each its particular share to happiness, he designed to ensure the happiness of the whole rather than of the part. The happiness of all depends entirely upon maintaining the proper relations among the individuals; each should love itself and others.

In the primitive state of society self-love and social love existed. Man's reason then learned useful rules from instinct. Reason observed principles of government from monarchical bees and republican ants. Man constructed his own cities

and societies and soon common interest suggested the need for a ruler, who was chosen for his virtues in learning and arms. True religion and government were united in love. Superstition and tyranny arose to invert nature's order, but man's self-love taught him to protect his interests by erecting governments and laws, finding private good in public. Self-love directed to social love returned general social harmony. It is this charity that renders particular forms of government and religion unessential, for charity always seeks the happiness of all, linking self-love with social love, enlisting all ranks of creation into a harmonious order.

Epistle IV views man in relation to happiness. Since God works by general laws, he intends all to be happy, not merely a few. Because order is Heaven's first law, there can be only one result: that some beings will be greater than others. Yet, if Heaven intended all to be equally happy, to be greater is not to be happier. True happiness is not located in external condition or possessions. God compensates those who lack them with hope for the future; those who have them fear the future.

Individual bliss on earth rests on three possessions: health, peace, and competence. To good or bad men fortune may bestow its blessings, but gifts of fortune dispose the individual as he obtains them to enjoy them less. In achieving bliss the virtuous man has most advantages. We must not impute injustice to God because the virtuous man often finds calamities

his reward for virtue. Calamity occurs through fortune or natural law; God does not dispense with his laws merely to favor a special person. Virtue, moreover, is not rewarded with material gifts.

Virtue's reward is not earthly and external. Its reward resides in the peace and joy of the heart. Earthly recompense would either be disdained as unworthy or would destroy the very virtue that prompted it. No shame or honor arises from one's station in life. True honor comes from faithful employment of one's responsibility. It is character that distinguishes a man, not his worldly fortune or fame. History teaches that those who attained worldly prizes frequently paid dearly for them. What deeds made the hero often corrupted the man.

Only true virtue is happiness. It is the sole thing a man may possess without loss to himself. Heaven's bliss is bestowed on him who avoids the extremism of sect and who observes in the creation the presence of God and the divine chain that links all to God. Such a man knows that true happiness belongs not to the individual but to the whole creation, that the source of all faith, law, morality, and happiness is love of God and of man. Self-love, transcending self in pursuing social love and divine, showers blessings upon all things. Self-love awakens the virtuous mind, and like a pebble dropped into water, stirring ripples on the surface, ever embraces wider and wider spheres, from friend, to parent, to neighbor, until it encompasses all living creation.

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF VISION

Type of work: Psychological study of perception

Author: George Berkeley (1685-1753)

First published: 1709

Berkeley is most importantly a philosopher, the second of the three British Empiricists, following John Locke and preceding David Hume. *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* was published in 1709, one year before his first impor-

tant philosophical work, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. Yet the *Essay* is not primarily a philosophical work. It is a study of visual perception which is best classed with experimental psychology. Its major objec-

tive is to show how we perceive the distance and size of objects and their spatial relation to other objects. In so doing, Berkeley manages to criticize most of the accepted views on the topic. The last part of the *Essay* is a consideration of the difference between perception by sight and by touch and of whether we ever perceive the same thing by both faculties. It is in his treatment of this latter issue that Berkeley hints at the philosophical doctrines which he soon elaborated.

Most of the standard discussions of vision in Berkeley's day were couched in terms of geometric diagrams showing how light rays converged and diverged when they passed through lenses or were reflected from surfaces of varying curvature. It was claimed that distance was estimated on the basis of the angle at which light entered the eye. His criticisms of such views give the first insight into the special character of Berkeley's concern. He says that the perception of distance cannot be explained by lines and angles because we never perceive any such things and those who know nothing of optics perceive distance without ever thinking of such lines and angles. Berkeley wants to know what we perceive immediately which allows us to say that something is near or far away. Nor will he allow us to say we perceive the distance between us and an object. We estimate it on the basis of our immediate perceptions. There are three we typically use: first, the sensation we get when we cross our eyes to see something very close; second, the confused appearance of an object as it gets close to the eye, and third, the muscular strain involved in preventing, temporarily, the confused appearance of an object close to the eye. In addition to these we use our knowledge of the size, number, kind, and so on, of the objects in question. There is no necessary connection between these perceptions and the distance of objects. We have found the connection in experience and this gives rise to a habitual or customary connection between these two

kinds of ideas. Visual perceptions are signs of distance and are related to it in the way a blush is to shame, or a word to the idea it stands for.

The more usual features of Berkeley's doctrine come to the fore when he explains how it is that we experience the visual sign and its connection with the distance it signifies. The idea of distance comes from touch. He insists that what we really mean when we say that an object is at a distance is that certain movements will result in certain sensations of touch. Not only do we not visually perceive distance—we do not visually perceive that which we claim to be at a distance. We say that the moon is at a great distance from us, but what we see is a small luminous disk. That is certainly not what we would find if we traversed the distance between us and the moon. What is really at a distance from us is the object of touch, not the object of sight. What we actually see is merely light and colors and these are only ideas, or sensations, and are not outside the mind at all, much less at some distance or other from us. Berkeley says that we no more see distance or distant objects than we hear distance or distant objects when we say on the basis of a clatter that the coach is a block away. In experience, certain visual perceptions are always connected with certain objects at certain distances, and one learns to infer what objects are at what distances on the basis of these perceptions. A man blind from birth and newly given sight could not tell, visually, what objects were in front of him or how far away they were. He sees neither them nor the distance and has not had the experience which will permit him to infer what the visual signs signify.

Berkeley's theory of the basis of judgments of magnitude is much the same as that for distance. Geometric explanations are rejected, and three immediate visual perceptions are offered. The first is the magnitude of the visual object; the second its confusion or distinctness, and the third its faintness or vividness. On the

basis of these, singly and in combination, and the general perceptual situation, we judge the size of objects. Here Berkeley makes another distinction between visible and tangible objects. When we speak of the size of an object, it is almost always the tangible size we refer to. Visual magnitude is used as a sign and is not really noticed. Insofar as a given object is thought to have a determinate size, this is tangible size, for visible size changes with location of the perceiver.

Failure to distinguish between visible and tangible objects is easy to explain as well as the source of much confusion. Our foremost concern with the size and distance of objects is to gain the pleasant ones and to avoid the painful ones. Pleasure and pain are much more tactual than visual matters; thus, for reasons of economy, our speech and ordinary thoughts are directed to tactual magnitude and location. We so seldom have occasion to focus on visible objects in their own right that we forget they are distinct entities. Failure to distinguish them is what makes certain visual phenomena puzzling. By not confusing them, Berkeley claims to remove the anomalies connected with the

moon when it appears large on the horizon, and with the fact that the retinal image of what we see is inverted.

The final quarter of the *Essay* is a negative answer to the question whether we can see and touch the same kinds of things; that is, shapes and sizes. Berkeley's final judgment is that one who had no tactual experience of a certain shape or size could not identify it visually. A visible square and a tangible square have nothing more in common than do a man and his name, and only the regularity of our experience justifies us in taking the visible to be a sign of the tangible. He goes so far as to say that a being which could think and see but not touch could not do geometry.

The *Essay* seems to contradict Berkeley's philosophy at one crucial point: it says tangible objects exist outside the mind, a view his philosophy explicitly denies. In Section 44 of the *Principles*, Berkeley says that he realized this to be a vulgar error, but that it was beside the point to refute it in the *Essay*. Whether or not this represents complete candor, Berkeley's *Essay* is interesting on its own and as an anticipation of his later views.

ESSAYS OF A BIOLOGIST

Type of work: Studies on scientific and religious themes

Author: Julian Huxley (1887-)

First published: 1923

Essays of a Biologist contains seven essays, besides the preface, which is an essay in itself. According to the author, the two most important studies are at the beginning and the end, but all are variations on the same theme.

Huxley's main purpose in all the essays is to demonstrate that biological science can be the basis of a new and stimulating religion. It is easier to explain what this religion is not than what it is, a fact which is perfectly understandable when one considers how complicated human knowledge and human culture have become. According to Huxley, a primitive

religion based upon supernaturalism is for primitive people, but as science advances knowledge, and human relations become more and more complex, religion must adapt itself if it is to be effective. In ancient times, when little was known about the universe or man's place in it, a religion based upon supernaturalism, ritual, revelation, and priestcraft was sufficient, but in the twentieth century it is an anachronism.

If religion is to serve modern man, it must first be stripped of all outworn and antiquated theology. To people bred in the Christian tradition, such a stripping

would seem to destroy religion entirely. Huxley believes, however, that it would only clear the way for a more realistic, powerful, and effective religion. It would be like tearing down an old building which had outlived its usefulness to build in its place a fine new structure, architecturally planned to fit present conditions.

Although Huxley never mentions the word *semantics*, he applies the principles of semantics to such words as *religion* and *God*. He does not discard the symbols, as some humanists have done, but seeks, rather, to give them new meaning. Both word symbols have meant many things to many people, and still do. In the terms of semantics, they are "loaded" words, more fraught with connotation than denotation. In seeking to give these words new meaning, therefore, Huxley is merely doing what many scholars, both religious and secular, have attempted to do, each according to his convictions. Because of his beliefs, Huxley has been called an atheist, but the word *atheist* is more often a term of vituperation than an exact, descriptive term. If it denotes the denial of any God whatsoever, then Huxley is not an atheist, but the founder and prophet of a new religion based on biological science.

Biology has reached the same point that physics and chemistry reached a century before: the extension of control. But, whereas control in chemistry and physics has enabled man to do more and experience more, biological science can give man control over body and mind to the extent that his entire view of the universe and his relation to it is transfigured.

The biologist, by studying evolution, has discovered proof that progress in the development of living organisms is not a delusion but a fact. This progress can be demonstrated in a purely objective manner, as Huxley shows in the essay "Progress. Biological and Other." Among living organisms, progress can be measured by (1) increasing efficiency of body organs, (2) improved co-ordination, (3) growth in size, (4) increasing accuracy and

range of senses, (5) the development of capacity for knowledge, (6) memory and educability, and (7) emotional intensity. That these are actual gains can be proved by the fact that they all lead to greater control over the external world and greater independence from environment.

But progress is no longer merely physical and organic. In man, evolution has entered a "Psychozoic Era" in which progress will be measured in terms of the mind rather than of the body. Before the development of self-consciousness in man, evolution was entirely blind, depending on chance variation and selection. Now, through man, evolution is conscious of itself and therefore better able to guide and control itself. Unfortunately, man has always shown a pronounced aversion to taking any responsibility for the state of the universe. It is much easier to shift the responsibility to Fate, God, Nature, and other such capital-letter abstractions. So long as man believes that the ordering of the universe is in the hands of an omnipotent Providence, he will continue to shun responsibility and will do little or nothing to advance the process of evolution.

In all the essays, but particularly in "Progress, Biological and Other," "Biology and Sociology," "Rationalism and the Idea of God," and "Religion and Science: Old Wine in New Bottles," Huxley repeatedly seeks to convince the reader that man must be responsible for progress and improvement in the world, that he can no longer afford to shift the burden on supernatural powers and other convenient abstractions. Man is himself a part of Nature and, most important, the conscious part. Evolutionary progress will henceforth be in the mind, in developing new and more effective psychical powers, and man, the only creature in which self-consciousness has occurred, must assume full responsibility for good or evil in the world.

A religion based on science, rather than on theology, has the following characteristics and advantages: 1) It stresses

religious experience rather than belief in any particular dogma. (2) It recognizes that religious experience is psychological, a product of the living mind, and not something inspired from without by supernatural powers. (3) It emphasizes the need for tolerance and enlightenment. Because it is based on no fixed creed, it can expand and adapt itself as man adds new facts to his knowledge of the world. (4) It recognizes that morals have evolved and should continue to evolve. The idea that morals are a fixed code established in the remote past by divine command has led to the present confused attitude toward sex as something shameful, unnatural, and sinful. (5) It makes possible a unified *Weltanschauung* in place of the present dual system of science and religion, natural and supernatural. (6) It maintains that if religious experience is accepted as psychological sublimation, the need for special priests or clerical mediators will be eliminated. Sublimation can be inspired by music, painting, sculpture, literature, philosophy, communion with nature, or by any deeply felt experience. There will be no need for a set "place of worship," or any set time. Men will be able to worship anywhere at any time.

The other three essays included in the book are of lesser import and will be treated briefly.

"Ils N'ont que de L'Âme: An Essay on Bird Mind" states that birds represent an evolutionary line of descent in which the development of emotions has superseded that of intellect. There are many examples of the apparent stupidity of birds, but Huxley is chiefly interested in convincing the reader that whatever birds lack in intelligence, they make up in emotions. He develops this theme by describing in some detail the courtship rites of such birds as egrets, grebes, kestrels, penguins, water turkeys, and others, some observed in Louisiana and some in England.

In "Sex Biology and Sex Psychology" Huxley discusses both the biological and the psychological aspects of sex. Under biology, he discusses the importance of the gonads and the entire endocrine system in the proper development of sex. He believes that at least some of the so-called Freudian complexes are physiological rather than psychological. Nevertheless, psychological maladjustments and conflicts are real enough, and many of these could be averted by proper sex education for children. Total repression of sex is very injurious, but so is complete indulgence purely on the physical level. In man, sex is no longer a mere reproductive instinct as it is in the lower animals. Because of his superior intellectual and social development, man has made sex an important part of his mental organization, where it can do great harm or great good. Harm comes when the sex drive masters all others, or when it is suppressed, or when it is sublimated to an unnatural extent. It can do the most good when it is subordinated to higher drives, but still permitted to fulfill the normal physical needs of the organism.

The remaining essay, if it can be called such, consists of two entirely different fantasies loosely joined by an informal running commentary. Although the title, "Philosophic Ants: a Biologic Fantasy," would lead the reader to expect only a fable concerning ants, equal space is given to a story about a scientist who invents a machine capable of altering the rhythm at which human beings live. The latter, as Huxley notes, is similar to "The New Accelerator," by H. G. Wells, but not influenced by it, since he was unfamiliar with the story when he wrote his fantasy. The "moral" of both fantasies concerns "biological relativity," meaning that what we perceive in the world about us is relative to the fluctuations of our environment, our own mental and emotional states, and the particular rhythm at which we live.

THE ESSAYS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

Author: Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

First published: *On the Margin*, 1923; *Essays New and Old*, 1926; *Proper Studies*, 1927; *Do What You Will*, 1929; *Holy Face and Other Essays*, 1929; *Music at Night*, 1931; *The Olive Tree*, 1936; *The Art of Seeing*, 1943; *Themes and Variations*, 1950; *The Doors of Perception*, 1954; *Brave New World Revisited*, 1958; *Collected Essays*, 1959; *On Art and Artists*, 1960; *Literature and Science*, 1963

Aldous Huxley wrote essays on a great variety of subjects: on nature, travel, literature, love and sex, psychology, music, painting, and even politics. Yet the division of his essays into groups can be misleading. In many of his studies the ostensible subject is only the point of a wedge and exists as the focus of opinions which are more or less contingent. Some of these opinions, it must be admitted, are in the nature of prejudices, and they are introduced into the essays at some peril.

For example, one of his essays on India, superficially an account of a railroad journey "Between Peshawar and Lahore," turns out to be an attack (a predictable one given Huxley's passionate secularism) on Indian religion in particular and on all religion in general. Huxley encounters on the train an Indian mystic, and the fact that this particular guru seems to be highly unspiritual leads with remarkable rapidity to an indictment of all religious belief. Huxley reflects, always with unquestionable brilliance, malice, and style, on the guru's character, on those of his disciples, and on his self-evident importance to himself. This particular holy man is dirty and rather objectionably the center of attention moreover, the attention accorded him is decidedly irrational and this fact particularly arouses Huxley's contempt. In response to his presence Huxley argues—and here one may wish to query the extension of his thought—that it is characteristic of all religions to honor the mindless and obedient, the dirty and the anti-intellectual. The conclusion is a large step from the example to the deduction, but Huxley seems to make it without much difficulty. Yet, with characteristic common sense

Huxley stops what he calls his own "Voltaireanism." He states that if all clerics were destroyed and if pure rationalism became the universal religion, all would *perhaps* be well. But, he adds, all would of course not be well at all, for there are other irrationalities which would soon take the place of religion. Like Voltaire, he sees religion as an institution of use to mankind. His viewpoint, although secular, is pragmatic: he objects to the nature of religion, not to its functions.

The values of Huxley are not to be compassed by religion, or even defined in the religious sense. He stands for a stable mental life, as we see in "Madness, Badness, Sadness"; for a realistic form of love, as we see in "Fashions in Love"; and for scientific toleration, as we see in "Beliefs." In the first of these essays Huxley reviews the history of the treatment of mental illness and asserts that some of the very worst excesses have been characteristic of religious intervention. He goes so far as to accuse Christianity of turning madness into a form of profit: the practices of Catholic magistrates and Protestant witch hunters were designed to make scapegoats of the mad. Since madmen and non-believers could equally be disposed of under religious repressions, they constituted a most attractive target for those who kept themselves in power by attacking men weaker than themselves. The argument is tenuous. One may note that religious persecution was a characteristic of certain ages as well as of certain institutions, but the point is not dealt with by Huxley. His general assumption is that religion is responsible for all those things which occur in the area it putatively overlooks.

When Huxley addresses himself to the problem of love, he notes that two conceptions of love exist in our minds at present. They represent different conventions and opinions, and they struggle for dominance in this century. One derives from the ideals of Christianity, and is of course founded on a moral interpretation of love. The other derives from nineteenth century Romanticism and is founded on an unreal sense of human experience. These two tend to give love a falsely ideal identity, and they are perpetually in conflict with the practices of postwar life. To Huxley, both our ideals and our practices seem to offer a singularly poor basis for love, and he hopes that the subject will be amenable to scientific investigation. His "Fashions in Love" asserts that the older, Christian, and non-scientific form of love was born of a set of weaknesses. It is a mixture of contradictions, of the ascetic dread of passion and the romantic worship of passion. These united to form love as we know of its "official" existence, a blend of mysticism and naturalism. In opposition to this view Huxley offers his own anthropological idea of love.

Every form of amorous behavior, he notes, no matter how strange, is found both among animals and men. In any given society, at any given moment, love is the result of the interaction of the instinctive material of sex with conventions, morality, religion, laws, prejudices, and ideals. Now this is both scientific and fascinating, and certainly no clearer statement of this position has been made. It might be pointed out, however, that in Huxley's argument amorous behavior is given the benefit of certain assumptions. For one thing, it is granted the quality of permanence simply because it is biological. Does it seem that ideas are any less valid, simply because they are not biological? One presumes not. Second, one might note that sexual activity is granted a certain value by Huxley, and this value is totally withheld from sexual restraint. In other words, Huxley accepts fully the

fact that sexual behavior operates with biological authenticity in every human being—but he somehow neglects to mention that the morality governing sexual behavior seems to be no less instinctive and permanent. Indeed, if we examine primitive cultures which have presumably escaped the burden of both Christianity and Victorian naturalism, we shall find that restrictions on sexual life are every bit as thorough and perhaps every bit as comical as our own taboos. To ask, then, as Huxley does in the conclusion of "Fashions of Love," for a new mythology of nature which will make love both more intelligible and less subject to irrational moral restraints, is perhaps to ask for something which is itself mythical.

To argue with Huxley, however, is to pay tribute to the openness of his mind. In other essays he reveals the capacities of mind which have made his iconoclasm a weapon of critical value. In "Wordsworth and the Tropics" Huxley attacks an old and cherished idea that nature is a great moral force and teacher and that "nature" poetry somehow accounts for the presence and conduct of man in his environment. He reflects on what would happen if Wordsworth were to experience not the cool and chaste *Gemütlichkeit* of the English countryside but the darkness and fever of the tropical jungle. In that setting, hostile, diseased, full of presences inimical to man, Wordsworth and his cult might forget their faith in the goodness of nature and waken to an awareness of evil.

Other essays carry Huxley's scientific iconoclasm into resounding conflict with the totems and taboos of our culture. In "Vulgarity in Literature" he seizes upon Dickens and belabors him for the treasonable loss of intelligence to sentimentality. Dickens, according to Huxley, ceases to be able and probably ceases to wish to see reality. His actual intention, on those occasions when he deals with tears and joy, is simply to overflow, nothing more. Huxley deals with D. H. Lawrence in a much less hostile way, yet he

points out that the weakness of Lawrence, as it was his strength, was his compulsion to orient himself around the sexual drives. There are very few men and ideas that can escape the qualifications of Huxley's judgment. Among them can be numbered Goya, on whom Huxley has done a remarkable job of interpretation. His sympathetic account of Goya's *desastres* in "Variations on Goya" is a model of artistic interpretation. For him to say that Goya remains incomparable is great praise indeed. We must realize how fully Huxley is committed to the scientific realism

so well objectified by Goya's sketches of the Napoleonic Wars. That every detail of butchery and torment is true remains the foundation of Huxley's praise: Goya becomes the archetype of the Huxleyan artist, scientific, objective, material in the highest sense. It is important that he refrains from picturing either the glory or picturesqueness of war—Goya's great virtue. Here one is able to comprehend the artist as the pictorial equivalent of Huxley, in that he paints horror upon horror because that is what he recognizes in telling detail in the world around him.

THE ESSAYS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

First published: 1850

In his youthful *Essay on Criticism*, Alexander Pope contended that only a demonstrated talent for creative writing gives a man the right to assess the literary productions of others. The history of criticism, of course, affords some notable exceptions. We are happy to accept the credentials of such distinguished literary critics as Aristotle, Longinus, George Saintsbury, or, to cite a modern example, I. A. Richards, even though none of these men has produced a substantial work of creative literature. Sometimes the reverse happens. The critical essays of Wordsworth, for example, are sometimes dismissed as the left-handed scribbles of a poet whose own practice repudiates his theory. But the criticism of Edgar Allan Poe is another matter. For whatever it may be worth, he meets the criterion of Pope; he had produced a number of poems and short stories before turning to criticism in the years that followed 1830. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that his criticism is often vituperative, narrow, derivative, or vague, he writes it with the authority of an accomplished master of composition, and it is here that he has something of value to say.

Most of Poe's critical essays appeared

in *The Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham's Magazine*, both of which he edited for brief periods between 1835 and 1842. Before he began his work as an editor and reviewer, however, he set forth a kind of prospectus of his critical theory in a "Letter" which first appeared as the preface to his *Poems* of 1831 (later published with slight revisions in the *Southern Literary Messenger* for July, 1836). The essay is youthful, impudent, and slight, but it definitely adumbrates the major themes of Poe's maturer criticism. And it is riddled with a number of inconsistencies. Like Pope, Poe begins by asserting that poets alone possess the ability to judge poetry—and shortly after cites a critical opinion of Aristotle. He denounces the reverence paid to foreign writers in preference to American ones, and he delivers a tirade against Wordsworth and Coleridge; but he concludes his essay with a definition of poetry that is lifted verbatim, and without acknowledgement, from the *Biographia Literaria*. His attack on Wordsworth is spiteful and even sophomoric. At one point he quotes a passage from Wordsworth's *Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 and embellishes it with jeering, parenthetical

interspersions of his own. Nevertheless, in his complaints about the didactic implications of Wordsworth's statements on poetry, he begins to suggest the direction of his own views—that poetry should seek to communicate pleasure rather than truth. He tells us also that music is essential to poetry because of its indefiniteness and that poetry is therefore the combination of music with a pleasurable idea.

In the reviews that began with his editorship of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835, Poe exercised his vituperative energies with considerable gusto, but at the same time he worked toward increasing refinement and precision in his formulation of literary principles. First of all, he sought to persuade the public that criticism of the literary art is a science, founded on the fixed and immutable laws of human reason and emotion, rather than simply an expression of opinion which might include any vague generalization about the work under scrutiny. He denounced especially the chauvinistic tendency of American reviewers, who gave indiscriminate praise to native writers and to books on "American" themes, regardless of their artistic quality, and who instinctively denounced any book with a foreign subject. For his own part, Poe gave no quarter to his own countrymen. He struck with a scalpel at Theodore S. Fay's *Norman Leslie*, a novel by the influential editor of the *New York Mirror*, mercilessly dissecting its preposterous plot and extravagant language. Yet while the review of *Norman Leslie* is largely an *ad hoc* exposé of Fay's inadequacies as a novelist, Poe's other reviews are often buttressed by an appeal to critical and literary principles, to considerations which transcend the work in question and which therefore provide a sounder criterion for judgment. His examination of poems by Joseph Drake and Fitz-Greene Halleck in 1836, for example, moves beyond the immediate subject for review into a discussion of poetry in itself. Poetic sentiment, he says, is the sense of the beautiful, the sublime and

the mystical; and the only means of evaluating the merits of a poem is by gauging its power to elicit this sentiment in the reader. He introduces, therefore, the principle that becomes a keystone in his poetic and literary theory: a work of creative literature must be analyzed in terms of its total effect.

This principle forms the basis of his critical perspective in all the essays that follow. In a review which appeared in *Graham's Magazine* in April, 1841, he applies it carefully to *Night and Morning*, a novel by Bulwer-Lytton. Poe admires the novel because of its perfection of plot, which he defines as an arrangement of incidents so interdependent that none can be displaced without destroying the fabric of the whole. Bulwer-Lytton, Poe conjectures, has written his story backwards, because he has first conceived his denouement and then designed his incidents to act as causes for the final effect. But Poe dislikes the episodic character of the book. He complains that its complexity is too great for the mind to comprehend at one time, so that it does not strike the reader with a single, unified effect. For its failure to produce such an effect, according to Poe, the length of the book is also responsible; this is the reason why he was so dissatisfied with anything long in poetry or fiction. Again and again he asserted that an overextended narrative destroys the unity of effect which he thought essential to a literary work.

With his review of Longfellow's *Balads and Other Poems* in *Graham's Magazine* of April, 1842, Poe enters the final and most important phase of his career as a critic. In this essay he explicitly condemns didacticism in literature, specifically the tendency of Longfellow's poems to inculcate a moral. Using terms and categories which he seems to have borrowed from Kant by way of Coleridge, he maintains that just as truth appeals to the intellect and duty to the moral sense, so poetry must appeal to taste alone, for taste is the sense which enables mankind

to appreciate the beautiful, and especially that which is eternally or supernally beautiful. This is the first of three crucial ingredients in poetry as Poe conceives it. The second is novelty or creativity, and the third—recalling a statement in his early "Letter"—is music, because of its celestial quality. The combination of these ingredients produces the definition to which Poe is finally committed: poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty.

The remainder of Poe's essays simply elaborate the principles he has already announced. In reviewing Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* in *Graham's Magazine* of May, 1842, Poe uses the concept of unified effect to formulate his theory of literary composition. He pays tribute to Hawthorne's genius (a generous gesture at the time), but he finds Hawthorne peculiar rather than original, because Hawthorne's stories fail to satisfy the reader's sense of the new. Also, Poe declares that Hawthorne's strain of allegory is objectionable because it interferes with that unity of effect which is absolutely essential to the success of a tale. After these rather perfunctory statements, he proceeds to enunciate his views on the value of brevity in literature. In his review of Bulwer-Lytton's novel he had criticized the assumption that length has any intrinsic merit; now he contends that if a poem is to produce the effect of intense excitement, it must be short. But it cannot be too short, he says, for it must have sufficient time to build the kind of momentum that makes a powerful impact. In poetry, as in the tale, the writer must have full control over the reader, and extreme length makes such control impossible. It militates against the fulfillment of the single effect which the writer must seek to establish with every word he writes. This is why Poe believes that a long poem is an impossibility. In his judgment, the hallmark of an effective composition is the evidence of design in every part of it, the ordering of all its aspects to a pre-established end.

Poe demonstrates the practical applica-

tion of this axiom in what is perhaps the most famous of his critical essays, "The Philosophy of Composition," first published in *Graham's Magazine* of April, 1846. Here he offers a detailed, step-by-step analysis of the process by which he composed *The Raven*. Whatever we may think of this cold-blooded dissection of the creative act, it is very probably true to the spirit (if not the letter) of what actually happened as Poe wrote the poem. In any event, the explication shows exactly how Poe intends a writer to achieve the all-important unity of impression; his composition of *The Raven* is a paradigm of the creative process as he understood it. He began, he tells us, with the intention of creating a single impression, an intense, elevating excitement of the soul. Every piece of the poem was then selected and arranged with this effect in view. First of all, he decided that the poem must be brief. Second, because beauty is the province of poetry he determined to achieve it with a tone of melancholy, established in a single, sonorous word and continuously repeated for maximum impact. Out of this grew the details of the poem—the refrain of "Nevermore," the raven, the bereaved lover, the dead woman, the chamber at midnight, the antiphonal exchange of questions and answers, and the driving rhythm with its strong alliteration and internal rhymes. All of these details were designed to produce a preconceived effect upon the reader, a feeling of beauty tinged with sadness. According to Poe, therefore, the principles of composition are precise, logical, and impersonal, even though the end in view is the evocation of intense psychic excitement. There is no place in the writing of poetry for careless rapture or fine frenzy. Cool and detached, the poet constructs a formula for the kind of impression he seeks to convey.

In a lecture he delivered frequently during the last years of his life, Poe summarized the major tenets of his literary theory under the title, "The Poetic Principle," and after his death the lecture was

published as an essay in *The New York Home Journal* of August 31, 1850. He recapitulates here the points we have already seen in the earlier essays, condemning length and didacticism, and emphasizing particularly that the value of a poem can be measured only by the effect it produces. But the chief purpose of the essay is to show, by a number of examples from various poems, that the poetic principle itself is the human aspiration for supernal beauty and that the principle

is always manifested in an elevating excitement of the soul. Poe thus concludes his literary criticism on a note of majestic vagueness, but he leaves us at the same time with a theory of poetry that springs from years of contemplation on his own practice. For all his generalities, his dogmatism, his vituperative harshness, and his intellectual debts abroad, Poe commands a prominent place in the history of literary criticism of America.

THE ESSAYS OF G. K. CHESTERTON

Author: Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)

First published: *The Defendant*, 1901; *Heretics*, 1905; *All Things Considered*, 1908; *Orthodoxy*, 1908; *Tremendous Trifles*, 1909; *Alarms and Discussions*, 1910; *What's Wrong with the World*, 1910; *A Defence of Nonsense*, 1911; *A Shilling for My Thoughts*, 1916; *Utopia of Usurers*, 1917; *The Uses of Diversity*, 1920; *The Superstition of Divorce*, 1920; *Eugenics and Other Evils*, 1922; *Fancies vs. Fads*, 1923; *The Superstitions of the Skeptic*, 1925; *The Outline of Sanity*, 1926; *Generally Speaking*, 1928; *Come to Think of It*, 1930; *All Is Grist*, 1931; *All I Survey*, 1933; *Avowals and Denials*, 1934; *The Well and the Shallows*, 1935; *As I Was Saying*, 1936; *The Common Man*, 1950

Robert Graves called Chesterton "the elephantine paradoxist." Like the man, the body of Chesterton's literature is enormous. A versatile and prolific writer, like his hero Samuel Johnson, he wrote plays, biographies, novels, and detective stories, nonfiction in such areas as anthropology, archaeology, ancient and recent history, national and international politics, theology, philosophy, art, and literary criticism; and he was also a renowned lecturer. The scope of his interests embraced almost every aspect of contemporary life. Although he was an eminent man of letters, he preferred to call himself a journalist. Beginning in 1901, he contributed regularly to two leading newspapers; in 1918, he became editor of *G. K.'s Weekly*. For thirty-five years, he regularly wrote informal essays to the exacting space limitations of the newspaper column form. That he welcomed such limitations is evident in many of the essays; one of his favorite paradoxes was that restraint, externally imposed by social necessity, internally

dictated by a self-disciplined conscience, offered the only freedom worth striving to achieve. Chesterton's informal essays provide a comprehensive presentation of his views.

Never as light as his contemporary, Max Beerbohm, Chesterton was seldom overtly serious. Occasionally he conveyed his serious points through fantasy. Though his most common tone was mildly satirical, his essays were seldom sustained satires. While he showed that pure reason has severe limitations and imposes certain penalties, it was clear thinking that enabled him to recognize the importance of nonsense. He feigned lunacy momentarily as a lever for insight into the nature and practice of sanity; in his views a sane man was one who, in a single moment, could have "tragedy in his heart and comedy in his head." The seeming lightness of his essays makes his insights more bearable and lasting.

Because his technique is transparent, perhaps, Chesterton's use of rhetorical devices appears even more impressive. He

makes us aware of certain devices only to capture us with others that operate simultaneously. For instance, he appears to end a thought in his characteristically epigrammatic way, but a few sentences later he startles us with a brilliant paradox or thrust of wit that he planted, parenthetically, in the epigram. His paradoxes are often inverted truisms. Each essay is a necklace of such paradoxes, used to choke or adorn the reader, depending on his doctrinal affinities. If his paradoxes are sometimes shallow, one must remember that deep ones are not so easy to dredge up that one can fill hundreds of essays, line by line, with them.

The informal essay is to prose what the lyric is to poetry, and it is most fascinating when the practitioner conveys a sense of himself. Chesterton's commanding "I", always felt, is overwhelming. He is constantly setting the reader straight, advising, scolding, cautioning him, balancing this aggression with an amiably ironical attitude toward himself. His exuberance, frank enthusiasm, vigor, robustness, and masculine high spirits reveal a strong man, an antidote to the whiners, weaklings, and victim mentalities of his time and ours. But he was a man of fine feeling. In "The Secret of a Train," upon discovering that he and a dead man are the sole passengers, he throws away his cigar, and thus understands the meaning of ritual. The mainspring of most of his essays is a personal experience, in the relating of which his facility for descriptive writing is apparent. Perhaps his most appealing characteristic is his belief, paradoxical for a conservative, in the importance of a romantic attitude. Most of the best things in the universe cost nothing; the others cost only a halfpenny. The source of man's major perplexity, he felt, ought to be the realization that there are so many interesting things in life that one cannot be sufficiently interested in any of them. In "On Running After One's Hat" and "The Romantic in the Rain" he argues that one should joyously and poetically transform the irritations of every-

day life. With one leg temporarily maimed, he saw "The Advantages of Having One Leg": one could see the beauty of both legs and thus God's image in man more clearly. Lacking white chalk with which to sketch, he used a piece of the rock he was sitting on and thus realized that England was "A Piece of Chalk."

One of his most famous paradoxes was that ordinary, everyday things are the strangest, most fascinating, and wondrous of all. He broke the routine form of the novel of crime detection by introducing the famous Father Brown, whose intuitions produced the solution to numerous mysteries. Chesterton was himself a sleuth of the mysteries of the ordinary, whose solution was that the common is far from commonplace if we remain always receptive to the metaphysical moment. He could turn an ordinary ride in a railway coach into a terrifying glimpse of the psychic perils of the familiar. Serving on a jury, he learns the amazing appropriateness of twelve ordinary men deciding important matters, as when Christ chose his disciples. In essay after essay, he turns the accepted notion upside down, thus making it more visible and understandable. To him, proverbs had a validity that overuse obscures; even vulgar jokes were subtle and spiritual ideas. The great task is to comprehend the trivial. For him, the path to outer space would begin at the front gate of one's own home. Given the hearthlike familiarity of his point of departure, his paradoxes often take off into the Kafka-esque, the absurd, into black humor. But typically enough, in Chesterton the absurd proves to be a domestic ceremony, and black humor ends on a coda of divine laughter.

The things that must have been most evident in the human parade Chesterton witnessed, through his youth in the late Victorian era, his manhood before and during World War I, his middle-age during the Jazz Age, and his old age during the Great Depression, were the spectacu-

lar paradoxes in human thought and behavior. He observed them daily in politics, literature, manners, mores, fads, fetishes, perversities, popular entertainment, and technological changes. This paradoxical ambience inspired nonconservative writers to undermine the foundations of Victorian attitudes with a kind of paradoxical relativism. Chesterton, the cool-headed arch-conservative, fought liberals with their own weapon. Paradox was a decadent device which he used to bury the decadents. But for him paradox was more than a weapon; if the liberal used it to destroy, or as a perverse solace amid the ruins, Chesterton used it to justify, explain, defend, and enshrine the tenets of his own doctrine, while hanging the enemies of stability by their heels. He demonstrated that paradox is the conservative's, not the revolutionary's, true province; it is the vehicle for the eternal return. His paradoxes became platitudes for certain conservatives, popularly known as Chestertonians (much as certain liberals were called Shavians).

A rugged optimist, somewhat like Browning in attitude and belief, Chesterton argued the efficacy of conservative principles, venerable institutions, ritual and convention, common sense, and Christian mores out of a vigorous, dogmatic disapproval of the prevailing skepticism and pessimism. A convert to Catholicism, he was an apologist and champion of the faith. Trust the order of things as they are, he said; everything has its proper place, proportion, and use. To be free of convention is to move slavishly from one fad to another. His notorious absent-mindedness was that of a man with his mind always on the literal things of the world. Characteristic of the true conservative, his point of view remained consistent, and he attributed his freedom of thought and imagination to this basic rigidity. For him, the exciting and important questions were the old ones.

Chesterton was a controversialist. He argued that to be profoundly international one must first be national. Social-

ism is slavery. Democracy is deeper than democrats understand, for what follows it is *true* revolution. Science, combined with hasty reform, will enslave man, and create a "panic of prohibition." Those who desire the perfection of society fail to see that perfection destroys its object. Chesterton lived in a time when technology promised a bright, if not a brave, new world, but it was one in which progress carried the germs of its own blight. He abhorred mass production and attacked technological infringements upon ordinary human liberties. In "The Pagoda of Progress" he argued that true progress was a search for a place to stop. Ever-increasing complexity in a civilization fosters a multiplicity of tortures. He noted that an old thing is disparaged the more we sense the necessity of concealing the awfulness of the new thing that replaces it. When there is no joy in work, there is no joy in leisure; the modern pleasure-seeker often destroys joy because he forces two pleasures to exist together so that they kill each other off, as when one combines good food with music or with the convenience of speed on a train. In "Sight-seeing" he declares that a mob going to see a sight is a contradiction; a sight should arrest a man accidentally; men should not arrest sights and imprison them in museums. In "On Lying in Bed" he laments that man has lost the art of doing nothing.

Chesterton was a man of culture whose erudition was clear and honest, without. He derided smug sophistication and precious intellectuality ("The Prison of Jazz," "Tennyson," "Meredith"). Only to the literary imagination is the sea infinite, for instance; Chesterton agreed with the country girl who said the sea resembled a cauliflower, a simile that expresses its boundedness. He believed that truly free men would speak in rhyme and meter. "The Slavery of Free Verse" consists in its trying to become more poetical by ignoring what distinguishes it from prose. He went to poetry to find better words than his own, not fidelity to every-

day speech. In "On Literary Cliques," Chesterton observes that the clique cherishes the imperfect work, the work in progress, rather than work worthy of the world. The strenuous work of artists is to describe the indescribable; thus the original mind always tries to explain itself. But certain modern critics and cliques deify the unutterable.

Chesterton ridiculed modern thought, postures of despair and disengagement, and sentimental evasion of moral principles disguised as fearless freethinking. In "On Sentiment" he showed that antisentimentalism is a snobbish form of sentimentalism, practiced by soft realists. In "The Sentimentalism of Divorce" he declares that he can understand why certain

liberals believe in divorce, but not why they ever get married in the first place. Free love is the enemy of freedom; the luxury of laxity in anything is a bribe of slavery; when the profligate has painted the town red, he cannot see any red at all. Chesterton preferred the coarse language of his ancestors to the "Evil Euphemisms" of certain realists. He declared that he was almost alone in not being a skeptic about liberty, for the free thinker is not free to think optimistically; he feels compelled to be a cynic or a pessimist. But Chesterton believed that all pessimism aspired to optimism. His own optimism was dedicated to revealing this paradox to pessimists.

THE ESSAYS OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Author: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

First published: From 1842 to after Thoreau's death

To the nonspecialist Thoreau's significant works could be numbered on the fingers of both hands. Of these undoubtedly the first to come to mind would be *Walden*, his most famous book, and perhaps *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. But almost as famous and perhaps even more influential have been several of his essays, which were written on various occasions for different purposes, and generally on rather widely ranging subjects. More than his two famous books, his essays vary in quality from the nearly banal to the profound, from the useless to the useful. To the reader genuinely interested in the life and writings of one of America's greatest and most influential writers—as well as perhaps our most outstanding true Transcendentalist—all his works are fascinating. But since many do concern closely related subjects and treat these topics in a similar manner, a selection of the works can give the heart of the essays.

Thoreau's earliest essay, possibly, is one named "The Seasons," written when he was only eleven or twelve years old.

As would be expected, it is of importance only to the close specialist. There are also in existence at least twenty-eight essays and four book reviews that Thoreau wrote while a student at Harvard. These, too, are of greater interest to the student interested in the young Harvardian than to the readers looking for the Thoreau of mature ideas and style.

His first published essay was "Natural History of Massachusetts," printed in 1842. This work does more than promise the later man. It is, in fact, the mature thinker and observer already arrived. Drawn chiefly from entries in his journals, which he had begun to keep after graduation from Harvard in 1837, it reveals his characteristics of Transcendentalism and his keen eye for observation, an eye that was to make him acclaimed by many people as one of America's best early scientists. It reveals Thoreau's pleasure in viewing the world around him and his detachment from the world of men. He believes, for example, that one does not find health in society but in the world of nature. To live and prosper, a person

must stand with feet firmly planted in nature. He believes, also, that society is corrupting, is inadequate for man's spiritual needs; when considered as members of a society, especially a political organization, men are "degraded." As a scientist, Thoreau catalogues many aspects of natural phenomena in Massachusetts; he notes, for example, that 280 birds live permanently in that state or summer there or visit it passingly.

Among Thoreau's best essays is another reasonably early one, "A Winter Walk," published in 1843, the material of which was taken mainly from his journal for 1841. As was generally the case with Thoreau, this essay is lyrical and ecstatic, the lyricism being augmented by the inclusion of various bits of Thoreau's own poetry. Thematically the essay is strung on a long walk on a winter's day and the observations and meditations of the author as he progresses. Both his observations and meditations are mature, virtually as vivid and sound as those given in the later *Walden*. His reactions to the physical walk are immediate and sharply detailed. He likes to walk through the "powdery snow," and he feels that man should live closer to nature in order to appreciate life fully. In a Wordsworthian-pantheistic point of view, he feels that plants and animals and men, if they would conform, find in nature only a "constant nurse and friend."

Thoreau's most famous essay is "Resistance to Civil Government," published in 1849 and renamed, after Thoreau's death, "Civil Disobedience," the title by which it is known today. As is often the case, this essay grew directly from an experience by the author, this time Thoreau's one-night imprisonment for non-payment of his taxes, taxes which he claimed would go to finance the Mexican War and were therefore, in his mind, immoral. The influence of this essay has been profound and far-reaching and long-lasting. It served Gandhi as a guidebook in his campaign to free India from British

rule; it also served the British Labour party in England during its early days; it offered model and hope for the European resistance against Nazi Germany, and it has aided, more recently, the struggle for civil rights by Negroes in the South.

The essay is a bristling and defiant reaffirmation of the individualism of man, of his moral obligation to restate his individualism and to act on it. Government, any government, is at best an expediency. Thoreau heartily accepts the precept "That government is best which governs least," a thesis which logically leads to the conclusion that "That government is best which governs not at all." Government, however, still exists, but it is not unchangeable: "A single man can bend it to his will." Government, in Thoreau's eyes, was far from pure and beneficent. He felt that he could not have as his government those institutions which enslaved certain races and colors. Therefore he felt compelled to resist his government. He felt that ten men—even one—could abolish slavery in America if they would allow themselves to go to prison for their belief and practice. Men of good will must unite. Every good man must constitute a majority of one to resist tyranny and evil. Democracy may not be the ultimate in systems of government, he concludes, in a ringing statement of man's political position: "There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly."

One of Thoreau's notable essays is "A Plea for Captain John Brown," published in 1860, one of three on the same person, the other two being "After the Death of John Brown," delivered at the Concord memorial services for Brown, held the day the raider of Harpers Ferry was hanged, and "The Last Days of John Brown," written for a memorial service on July 4, 1860. The earliest essay of the

three justifies the actions of Brown because generally he tried to put Thoreau's convictions into action.

"Walking," published in 1862, was taken from his journal written some ten years earlier and used as material for lectures in the early 1850's. It is an enthusiastic reaction to the joys of walking, "for absolute freedom and wildness," in which Thoreau in effect boasts that the course of progress is always westward, drawn probably from the mere fact, as has been pointed out, that around Concord the best walking country was to the southwest. Extremely lyrical, the essay sometimes surfaces into sheer nonsense, as in the statement, for example, that "Above all, we cannot afford not to live in the present. He is blessed over all other mortals who loses no moment of the passing life in remembering the past." Such comments caused a more deeply dedicated thinker, Herman Melville, to react with great scorn and frequently to satirize Thoreau's easy optimism.

"Life Without Principle," published more than a year after Thoreau's death in 1863, was likewise drawn from the journals during the author's most powerful decade, in the early 1850's. Delivered in 1854 as "Getting a Living," it is a ringing statement on the dignity and real worth of the individual, of the man. It is the voice of the self-reliant man calling all individuals to the assertion of their self-reliance so that they can live like men and live fully. Thoreau feels that most men misspend their lives, especially those who are concerned merely with getting money: "The ways by which you may get money almost without exception lead downward. To have done anything by which you earned money *merely* is to have been truly idle or worse." To be

born wealthy is disastrous, as he says in one of his pithy statements, is rather "to be stillborn." The wise man cannot be tempted by money. He must be free, as Thoreau was convinced, feeling that his "connection with and obligation to society are still very slight and transient."

The world must be composed of individuals and must live not for the moment but for eternity. "Read not the Times. Read the Eternities." America must reform. "Even if we grant that the American has freed himself from a political tyrant, he is still the slave of an economical and moral tyrant." In other ways America has not lived up to her potential. She is not the land of the free. "What is it to be free from King George and continue to be the slaves of King Prejudice? What is it to be born free and not to live free?" The everyday affairs of life, politics, and routine, are necessary aspects of life to be sure, but they should be "unconsciously performed, like the corresponding functions of the physical body" so that the mind—the better parts of men—can rise to the greater and nobler aspects of living so that they will not discover at death that life has been wasted.

This essay is Thoreau at his best. He is characteristically the Transcendentalist, the individualist, voicing his opinion without reserve, pithily and most tellingly. Thoreau was perhaps more than other nineteenth century American writers circumscribed in his subjects for writing. Therefore his essays are repetitious. He liked to brag that he was widely traveled in Concord. But, though perhaps narrow in breadth, Thoreau's writings are shafts reaching to the essence of man's being. And a half dozen essays represent him truthfully and succinctly.

THE ESSAYS OF MAX BEERBOHM

Author: Max Beerbohm (1872-1956)

First published: *The Works of Max Beerbohm*, 1896; *More*, 1899; *Yet Again*, 1909; *And Even Now*, 1920; *A Variety of Things*, 1928; *Mainly on the Air*, 1946

Max Beerbohm was a caricaturist, a writer of informal essays, and a drama critic for twenty years. His manner was always elegant, delicate, and grave, and he wore an air of perpetual melancholy. It was said of him that as a very young man he had mastered the secret of perpetual old age. Partly his melancholy stemmed from his deep admiration of the past. He looked wistfully backward to Victorian London and deplored changes of any sort. He began to draw at an early age and drew sharp, witty caricatures that both amused and angered his subjects. Often he requested permission of his subjects before drawing them, sometimes having an interview in order to catch closely their essential characteristics. He did caricatures of the royal family that were subsequently bought up and kept out of circulation. Many of his drawings are in museums.

He could not draw other than as he felt, and during the Boer War he was sharply critical of England's role and of Rudyard Kipling's imperialistic sentiments. As an old man he confessed that he had not intended to be cruel to Kipling, one of the few people whom he alienated, to his great regret. As a drama critic he upheld standards of good drama, deploring plays that were simply commercially successful. However, he made light of his work as a drama critic, as he did of all his work.

As might be expected in one who was an expert caricaturist, his chief interest was in people, their characters and the way they lived rather than in what they preached. He believed that most people wear masks and that the most successful people are those few who are what they seem, who have become one with their masks. Thus he felt that Bernard Shaw harangued his audiences, that the best part of him was in his stage directions and his criticism. Max, of course, was always for the underdog, the victim of society. He admired greatly the music hall singers who sang songs portraying the little man, pathetic but gallant and humor-

ous in the face of overwhelming odds. His essays are built around trivial subjects generally and are written with the quiet humor and nostalgic air of one who looks to the past and finds the present generation rather strange and events moving too rapidly.

In his first collection of essays, *The Works of Max Beerbohm*, there are such pieces as "Dandies and Dandies" and "Poor Romeo!" In the former the writer discusses the true dandy and of the person that attempts to be one. Max felt that Beau Brummell was the true dandy and that many men have tried but failed to reach the pureness of Brummell's art. Count D'Orsay tried to be a dandy but did not regard dandyism as a serious art and therefore fell short of the mark. Mr. Le V., a name given by Max, is shown in preparation for the serious art of being a dandy. The preparations take all morning and near noon Mr. Le V. enters his dressing room. In an interview he even tells Max what he will wear to approach the pearly gates.

"Poor Romeo!" is a wonderfully written essay on Robert Coates. It relates an interlude in Bath and tells how Coates was tricked into portraying Romeo in the most ridiculous manner by the woman he loved simply to get her revenge because of a trick he had enjoyed at her expense. Robert Coates was a real person, not a creation of Max's mind, as were T. Fenning Dodworth, Mr. Hethway, or Enoch Soames. Coates went on to act the same role in England. Max's account of the interlude is clever and polished as are most of his essays. His statement that he was for the underdog can be affirmed by this essay and by his character Enoch Soames, who did not exist in life but became real to the people who read Max's article on him.

Max's second publication of collected essays, *More*, contains several clever works. One, "Going Back to School," is amusing and interesting. Max tells of his school experiences and how glad he is to be finished with them. It is Max's style

and manner of phrasing that keeps the reader entertained and interested. In this essay Max describes returning to school after a holiday as being something comparable to drowning; the rude sound of the first bell served to remind him he was now in school. Max desired comfort, something he felt was totally lacking in school life. Also, he felt that at Oxford all the nonsense which had been worked out of undergraduates in dreary, earlier schools was returned to them. He wonders why he should feel any pity for the present schoolboy; Max feels that the remembered unpleasantness of school makes his present complacency more enjoyable.

Max's ideas on "Hosts and Guests" is found in his work *And Even Now*. His views were complementary to those of Gerhart Hauptmann. It was Max's contention that people had either the desire to offer hospitality or to accept it, and it is this desire to be one or the other that divides people into the two classes: hosts and guests. His comments on the entertaining done by the Borgias is quite clever. Max says that a Roman could say that he was going to eat dinner with the Borgias, but you would never hear a Roman say that he had dined with the Borgias. Max is certain that he was born a guest and the fact that he must sometimes be the host makes him as uncomfortable as a host who is forced to act as a guest.

"Ichabod" was Max's hatbox. The essay is found in the work *Yet Again*. "Ichabod," as Max's traveling companion, carried a collection of labels. When Max sent the hatbox to a trunk-maker to have the lock repaired, the well-meaning man removed all the labels. The collection represented only the places Max had actually visited. The labels are discussed as are the various incidents they bring to mind. Max ends the essay with the statement that greater adventures are surely awaiting "Ichabod."

The same collection contains "Seeing People Off," an excellent study of the fu-

tility of it all. The fact that people do not really want to see you off and that you would rather they did not rings true in his example. Also, "A Pathetic Imposture" shows us the length to which newsmen go to make a simple story complicated. He even shows us how this is done by the use of diagrams.

Max's attachment to England was strong and during the war years he returned to London. During World War II he did many broadcasts, reading his own essays. At this time he came to be regarded with great affection. His quiet, elegant voice, serenely undisturbed by the war, was entirely occupied with personal matters and with upholding traditions, both large and small, and thus he contributed greatly to English morale at a difficult period. These broadcasts were later published with some essays in a collection titled *Mainly on the Air*. "Speed" is one of the most entertaining. Max states that today, speaking of the year 1936, you must creep into a car, crouch while in it, and squirm out of it. The old cars, Max says, were open to the elements. Air was forced into your lungs, dust filled your pores, and you were jostled about in every direction. Max felt that all this was good for you, that a good shower after such an experience made you feel like a new man. Inspiration could be created by a man running, galloping on horseback, driving a pair of horses at breakneck speed, sailing a boat, or flying by the use of natural wings. Flying in an airplane, motor-boating, or riding in a car was not inspirational and would not move writers as some more natural means could. Part of this essay was used by pedestrians in a pamphlet they published.

Several characters Max wrote about so vividly and in such detail that people believed they were real men. But they lived only in Max's imagination. Mr. Hethway and T. Fenning Dodworth, particularly the latter, gained great reputation. Dodworth was dignified but had a pungent, barbed wit. His famous phrase was "And after?" Max also made up an interview

with Albert Einstein in which Einstein explained how he came to discover his theory. Max finished by vowing that he would see that the world knew of Einstein's discovery.

Often Max wrote essays about his friends. George Moore he considered an absolutely natural man. He spoke simply and if he had nothing to say he kept quiet in a blank sort of way. His expression never changed. Nevertheless, he was a fine critic, honest and modest, and his face was a delight to painters, who found it a challenge. Sir Desmond MacCarthy was a good writer and a fine talker, chiefly because his constant remarks were, "Tell me, tell me," followed by, "I see, I see." For Max, William Butler Yeats was a man apart, not really of this world. Often Max failed to get his meaning, and while Yeats's speeches were not moving, Max considered this failure to be his, not the poet's. He knew Henry Irving as a young man who even in his youth intimidated others. Max tells about his having luncheon with Irving one day. Irving asked him questions and Max began to talk nervously, unable to stop and feeling that he was making a worse impression every moment. Finally, in answer to a question about his future, Max said he thought himself called to the bar. At the very moment of saying this to Irving—who said simply, "Ha!"—he knew his statement to be so absurd that he changed his mind on the spot and knew he would never, never be called to the bar.

Max's nostalgia about the past and its manners can be found in many essays, such as the one on the top hat, in which the hat seems almost alive, responds to different moods, care and weather; or the one called "Ichabod," about the much-traveled hat box covered with labels; or the essays on the House of Commons in which Max says that in the old days speakers had true style, robust and impressive. Nowadays he feels that they have no style whatever and would do better to remain silent. Once he saw a per-

formance in a small town of the Morris dance for May Day. He traces the history of this dance back to its origins, recalls the famous dancers Kemp and Thorn-drake, and laments that this simple survival of the past will soon be gone. Grace itself he felt had gone into decline. Modern young men, he decides, are boorish. Grace in the little affairs of life must be learned, and the modern young man does not learn easily. While he liked to see some juvenility swagger, he did believe that all the things worth doing have been done; those left undone had better be given a wide berth.

Two places Max frequented by himself: the station hotel and the law court. He often bade his friends goodbye, said he was going on a trip, and then went to the station hotel in London where he enjoyed the spacious rooms, the meals by himself, and the sight every morning of the workers rushing off on the trains. The law court he found more satisfying than the theater. He loved the paneling, the wigs, the scurrying of the clerks, and the eagerness and ominousness of it all. He never considered whether the person concerned were guilty or innocent, but what kind of person he was. He derived acute mental enjoyment from a cross-examination.

Max's real love was drawing, an art he continued to practice for his friends until his death. He had given up caricaturing some years before when he discovered that he was drawing true likenesses instead of caricatures. In one essay, "Fenestralia," he considered portraits with the subjects placed in windows. He thought the window frame was to painting as form is to literature, as the proscenium is to a play. One's imagination had entire freedom to picture what was inside the room. Also, words spoken by a person half indoors or outdoors are more impressive than words spoken entirely inside or outside.

In the hospital, during his last illness, Max pointed out to Elizabeth Jungmann, the secretary-companion who became his

wife shortly before his death, how the setting sun threw a purple shadow across a portion of his room. This color and shadow he watched with pleasure and he would not allow a light to be turned on

in the room so that the shadow might have a longer life. Max had an artist's eye and was ever attentive to the nuances of character and color about him.

EXILE AND THE KINGDOM

Type of work: Short stories

Author: Albert Camus (1913-1960)

Locale: North Africa, Paris, Brazil

First published in translation: 1958

When Albert Camus received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957, there was some surprise that the award had gone to so young an author and one whose ultimate direction was still uncertain; but there were few dissenting voices. The reason is clear. Even though his meanings may not be easily grasped, Camus was obviously an important writer in the European tradition of the man of letters. As novelist, playwright, political and moral pamphleteer, and short story writer, he had from the beginning of his career addressed himself to a program of literary activity which, according to the citation of the Swedish Academy, "with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times." If his preoccupation with the larger concepts of man's fate—war, guilt, God, love, and death—on occasion clouded with abstract argument the simple fables he chose to enclose them, he nevertheless demonstrated the working of a poised and sincere intelligence in his attempt to reconcile the evidence of history with the idea of life as value. His importance to us is the imaginative treatment he gave to the political and the moral decay which underlie the special terror of our century.

Each age creates its own shapes of fantasy and terror. Roderick Usher gives place to Dorian Gray. The terrors of the Grand Guignol have their sea change in Faulkner's Jefferson or on the rocky beach at Carmel. The outcasts of Dostoevski echo in the troubled ghosts of

Koestler and Silone. Our century has found its agonized image in the psychology of the irrational and its meaning in themes of guilt and expiation. Raskolnikov and Mitya, Conrad's Razumov and Lord Jim, Mann's Krull, Kafka's K., and Camus' Meursault mark the line of its succession. This literature represents our accumulation of suffering in terms of grief, guilt, and loss. But today the whole impact of disaster and doom is no further from us than the news broadcast or the headlines of our daily papers. We all have our part in the nightmare of history, and we wonder at what point we were betrayed. Somewhere in the past, in the unconscious reservoir of memory and dream, we should have prepared ourselves for this age of wars, regimented societies, and threats of mass annihilation.

Today every serious writer must commit himself in some degree to this literature of terror. He cannot transcend his world; he can only describe it. Even if he believes that we are between two great movements of civilization, he faces a world of no set values. Crime, for example, loses much of its moral significance when it becomes political and impersonal; murder may be virtuous and treachery noble. The earlier writer could take his world for granted. The characters of Dostoevski and Dickens are everywhere surrounded by a society that rested upon recognizable moral value; we measure the enormity of their guilt by the intellectual, social, religious, or domestic beliefs of the society from which they

stand apart. But the modern writer has no such vista. He uses the immediate nightmare to explore the lies, perversions, brutalities, and fears which threaten man's responsibility through morality or reason, and if he is nimble enough he may reclaim the human atom from the processes of annihilation and death.

In the nihilistic world of Albert Camus, salvation is neither easy nor consoling, for his people achieve at best a sense of identity and a mere glimpse of fulfillment. As he wrote in *The Rebel*, those who cannot accept God or the evidence of history must live for others who, like themselves, are unable to live fully; they must live for the humiliated. This is the theme running through all his books, though it becomes more explicit in his later work, his brilliant short novel, *The Fall*, and the six short stories in *Exile and the Kingdom*.

It is clear that out of the confusion of the time Camus was able to formulate for himself a strategy of moral advantage—a series of strategies, rather, which began with the view of the absurd, carried him through the philosophy of revolt, and then uncovered the Greek ideal of measure seen behind his later literary position. These shifts in attitude and insight help to explain the fact that the total body of his writing suggests an area of greater significance than he presented in any single work. Also, they account for the complementary nature of his books and the fact that each seems to answer a question previously raised, so that *The Plague* may be read as an answer to *The Stranger*, *The Fall* as a response to *The Plague*, and all three interpreted as responses to questions raised in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*.

This interrelated aspect of his work gives *Exile and the Kingdom* its qualities of relevance and depth. All are, in effect, parables that rely on symbolism and philosophical consideration of the outsider's plight to convey meanings implied but never clearly stated. One of the most perplexing stories is "The Adulterous

Woman." The middle-aged heroine, Jane, has gone with her dull, complacent salesman husband on a business trip to North Africa. Her encounter with the Arabs and the desert awaken her to a realization of the barrenness and waste in her own life, much like this arid land which she thinks of as a strange kingdom where since earliest times men have walked in poverty and sadness but free, serving no one. She feels that this is the kingdom promised her, but unattainable. One night she attempts to come into her kingdom—to escape the slow misery of living and dying—by going out on the city wall to experience a brief sense of mystical union, almost sexual in its intensity, with the desert and the night, only to return to her hotel bedroom and weep at the sight of her stupid, sleep-dazed husband, the image of her bondage and exile.

"The Renegade" gains its effectiveness through horror and atrocity. A young missionary priest who mistakes his will to power for a martyr's zeal has gone to minister to a Bedouin tribe living in a strange city of salt. The savage tribesmen have subjected him to unspeakable cruelties. Half-crazed, his tongue torn out, he has rejected his faith to worship the monstrous fetish of his captors. In this tale in the form of a monologue the narrator proclaims that only the reign of evil, of absolute power, is without flaw. When the opportunity comes, he determines to kill another missionary who is being sent to the city. Apparently, for the sequence is never clear, the wild tribesmen seize and torture him again. In his agony he hears a voice promising forgiveness if he will die for hatred and power. He is unable to tell whether he hears God's voice or that of the other man unwilling to die at his feet. The symbolism of aridity and torment is again introduced at the end of the story; the mouth of a slave is filled with salt.

In contrast to these clouded tales, "The Guest" is comparatively simple in outline. In a remote schoolhouse on a

high Algerian plateau the teacher, a young man with no sense of exile in this world of mountain and desert, is preparing to stay out a sudden snowstorm. Two travelers take refuge in the schoolhouse, a gendarme and his prisoner, an Arab murderer. Because the gendarme has other duties, the authorities have requested that the schoolteacher conduct the prisoner to the nearest village. The teacher, caught between his disgust with the crime committed and his aversion to turning a man over to the law, sets out with the prisoner, but at a place where the roads branch he turns the Arab loose to decide between the path to prison or the path to freedom. To his surprise, the Arab takes the road to prison. On his return to the schoolhouse the teacher finds a threatening message from the murderer's kin scrawled on his blackboard. Another story of restrained effect, though less successful, is "The Silent Men," which tells of a coopers' strike that has failed. Returning to the factory, the workmen preserve passive silence when their employer tries to gain their good will. The men understand their employer's dilemma and intentions but are unable to speak the word that will restore a universe of sympathy and understanding.

"The Artist at Work," the only story of French background, is a pointed satire of the artist's dilemma in our modern society. For years Gilbert Jonas, a holy innocent of the creative spirit, has followed his "star" in his painting. When he is finally discovered and becomes a great success, he pays the price in loss of privacy and increasing demands on his time. Unable to work, he takes to drink, neg-

lects his family, and realizes that he has lost his star. At last he retreats to an attic cubbyhole which he never leaves. He is supposed to be painting his masterpiece. When he finally collapses from exhaustion, a friend climbs up to his roost and finds only an empty canvas containing a single word, almost indecipherable, which is either "solitary" or "solidary."

The theme of isolation and solidarity is repeated in "The Growing Stone." The central figure is D'Arrast, a French engineer who has gone to Brazil to build a bridge. In a native village he encounters a former ship's cook who, after a narrow escape from death at sea, has vowed to march in a religious procession with a hundred-pound stone on his head. But the native wears himself out dancing the *macumba* on the night before the ceremony and collapses under the weight of his burden. D'Arrast picks up the stone and carries it for his friend, not to the church, however, but to the native's hovel. There he throws the stone into the fire as a gesture of solidarity with the outcast and the poor.

These stories show Camus dominated by the spectacle of man's suffering, humiliation, and sense of solitude; they are legends of the exile's attempt to enter the kingdom which history has denied him. Camus was never glib, never irresponsible. The intelligence of the man and the integrity of the artist gave his work its air of the portentous as well as its compulsive utterance of truth. He has been called a framer of questions, but his questions are those that need to be asked if we are to understand the answers already apparent in the life of our time.

A FABLE FOR CRITICS

Type of work: Critical satire in verse

Author: James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

First published: 1848

Lowell's *A Fable for Critics* appeared in 1848, three years after Poe's "The Raven" and three years before Melville's

Moby Dick. Born the same year as Melville and Whitman, Lowell was twenty-nine years old and had already gained

something of a reputation as poet and anti-slavery essayist.

Writing in the age of Emerson and Hawthorne, Lowell believed that native American literature had come of age. He argues this in a section of *A Fable for Critics*, echoing Emerson's "American Scholar" address of eleven years before and looking ahead to Whitman's famous preface to *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. "Forget Europe wholly," he advised the American writer.

But when *A Fable for Critics* is read today — never all the way through, to be sure—it is read for its satire. The author flippantly exhibits his contemporaries: Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Dana, and many small fry. Lowell had a young man's irreverence and industry; combining both, he produced in his work a 2,100-line poem in which a few choice verbal thrusts have always delighted readers:

There comes Poe, with his raven, like
Barnaby Rudge,
Three-fifths of him genius and two-
fifths sheer fudge.

Of James Fenimore Cooper:

. . . the women he draws from one
model don't vary,
All sappy as maples and flat as a
prairie.

More often than not, Lowell makes acute judgments, as in the quotations above. But the poem has serious defects. It is no systematized essay in verse in the manner of Pope; rather, it is rambling and digressive caricature. Unfortunately too, many of Lowell's characters have so declined in significance that his satire is lost. To modern tastes, Lowell's clattering anapestic tetrameter and his embarrassingly outrageous rhymes ("philosopher," "loss of her") prove impossible to endure, even in a poem intentionally comic.

The structure of the poem offers trouble also. Lowell chose the long way around to get at his satire. Ostensibly the poem merely describes the parade of vari-

ous American writers past the not too interested personage of Phoebus Apollo. The writers are in the form of cackling fowls led by "Tityrus Griswold" (Rufus W. Griswold, an influential anthologist of the day). This rather mechanical scheme offers little excitement or sense of direction.

Lowell had precedents for his sort of lampooning. Literary ancestors of the *Fable* are such works as Pope's *The Dunciad*, Leigh Hunt's *The Feast of the Poets*, and Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. The greatest resemblance is to Hunt's poem. Lowell's *Fable* itself served as model when another Lowell, Amy, decided to produce her own *Critical Fable* in 1922.

Lowell wrote the "satire," as he called it, *con amore* (to use his term again). His high spirits are immediately evident in the title page and the introduction. The elaborate title page, ostensibly no more than an imitation of wordy, old-fashioned book format, is actually the beginning of the rhymed couplets: "Reader! walk up at once (it will soon be too late), and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate *A Fable for Critics*. . . ."

The rhymed introduction itself then follows, wherein a candid Lowell limits his purpose and forestalls possible censures. The poem, he avers, is a mere "trifle," full of digressions and written in "neither good verse nor bad prose." It is a *jeu d'esprit* whose verbal portraits are both cynical and faithful.

Lowell attached a considerably longer essay in rhyme to the second edition. Here, in the spirit of exuberance which pervades the work from beginning to end, he remarks on the mixed critical reception of the first edition.

Preliminaries over, the reader plunges into the poem proper. Lowell himself narrates throughout, but the first personage encountered is out of Greek mythology, Phoebus Apollo. Lowell, of course, here uses a favorite device of the fabulist: setting and characters of other times and other places to add ludicrousness and per-

spective to his satire on people of his own day.

Apollo, sitting under a laurel tree, has been reading recent poetry and bemoans its mediocrity. Feeling the need to write something himself—to mourn his Daphne—he decides that a lily is needed to set his faculties to work. One of his sycophants, a pedantic bore (“The defect in his brain was just absence of mind”), hastens to fetch it. Apollo meanwhile is “killing the time” when the first of Lowell’s real people walks up to him. This is Evert Augustus Duyckinck, editor and critic, who is pictured as a small, muttering, reputation-conscious individual. While he and Apollo exchange barbs, the procession of American authors commences. This parade makes up the bulk of the poem.

First, naturally enough, is Ralph Waldo Emerson, who by 1848 had published his two famous series of essays. It is Apollo who describes the procession itself, and all descriptions are from his mouth. Lowell’s use of the fable device thus allows him to satirize without using his own voice. Emerson has “a Greek head on right Yankee shoulders”; the Transcendentalist

. . . sits in mystery calm and intense
And looks coolly around him with sharp
common sense.

Two writers who “trod in Emerson’s track” then appear: William Ellery Channing, poet and Concord litterateur, and Henry David Thoreau. Both are inferior to Emerson; all they do is pick up the “windfalls” from Emerson’s tree.

Fourth and fifth in the procession are Bronson Alcott and Orestes Brownson. Alcott, the Platonic idealist and mystic, avoids the mundane, has “never a fact to perplex him or bore him.” Brownson is the New England individualist who turned from Presbyterian to Universalist to Roman Catholic. Amid the satire, Lowell-Apollo speaks commendation: Alcott is a magnificent talker; Brownson

writes “transparent and forcible prose.” These two vignettes thus typify Lowell’s willingness to compliment as well as to laugh, if compliments are deserved.

Fifty lines then characterize the now-forgotten Nathaniel Parker Willis, foppish and shallow, yet delightful and witty as poet and playwright. Theodore Parker, Unitarian clergyman and writer, comes next, his doctrinal radicalism satirized as well as his erudite sermons.

Two familiar poets then appear: William Cullen Bryant and John Greenleaf Whittier. Bryant, the poet of nature, is no Wordsworth (says Apollo), but perhaps he is a James Thomson or a William Cowper. In any case, he is quiet, cool, and dignified as an iceberg. Whittier is a pacifist Quaker, but he is engaged in militant wars for human rights. In his poetry there is a major defect: “torrent of verse bursts the dams of reflection.” Whittier’s human qualities lead Apollo into a general panegyric on all poets who ever “spoke out for the dumb and the down-trodden.”

Two lesser-known writers continue the procession: Richard Henry Dana, Sr., and John Neal, journalist and novelist.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is next, one of the few writers on parade who receive unqualified approval. He is strong, earnest, graceful, good-tempered—“fully and perfectly man.”

James Fenimore Cooper fares less well, however, in twice as many lines. According to Apollo, he has created one character, the woodsman Natty Bumppo, and has done nothing but copy him ever since. Cooper’s virtue is boldness of utterance; he speaks his mind whether people like it or not.

The admirable way in which Cooper “lectures his countrymen gratis” reminds Apollo of several “truths you Americans need to be told.” The main thing is to refuse to be intimidated by England. Americans brag of their New World but do not really quite believe in it. So Americans keep looking to England for ideas and literature. Instead, they should re-

flect their own land and their own century.

After a quick jab at slavery by Phoebus, the conversation is interrupted by Miranda (Margaret Fuller). She is a rather obnoxious egoist, "with an I-turn-the-crank-of-the-Universe air." She inspires Apollo to give a digression on bores. Congress is full of them.

The parade now resumes with a novelist neglected today, Charles Frederick Briggs. He is amiable, if self-contradictory.

Next comes the famous vignette of Poe, "who has written some things quite the best of their kind, / But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind." This description is interrupted by a spirited defense of Longfellow.

Lydia Maria Child, another forgotten novelist occupying more than one hundred lines, is succeeded by Washington Irving, presented as a man of "warm heart and fine brain." Praise for Irving yields quickly to recognition of Sylvester Judd, a novelist of New England.

At this point Lowell himself enters the poem again, for the purpose of a digressive paean to the state of Massachusetts. She is the home of workingmen and industry. Here the rough new continent

was tamed. Here are themes of great art and literature.

Apollo then resumes his running commentary on the parade. The vigor, fancy, and fun of Oliver Wendell Holmes receive acclaim, and then comes none other than Lowell himself, "striving Parnassus to climb."

After him appears Fitz-Greene Halleck, a minor versifier. Succeeding him are figures even more insignificant: the unnamed American counterparts to such novelists as Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli, or Scott. Apollo amuses himself by laughing at their self-importance.

Apollo's lily-searchers, who had disappeared at the beginning of the poem, now re-enter to lead matters to a conclusion. But before ending, Apollo makes some pointed remarks about literary criticism. In the good old days when poets were visionary, free, and prophetic, there were no critics. But now the domain of art is overrun by pedantic and carping critics: "He who would write and can't write can surely review."

But no sooner does Apollo work himself into a furious rage than loquacious Miranda intrudes her opinion. Forthwith Apollo flees, as does Lowell, and the burlesque comes to its abrupt end.

THE FALL

Type of work: Novel

Author: Albert Camus (1913-1960)

Time: The 1950's

Locale: Amsterdam and Paris

First published: 1956

Principal characters:

JEAN-BAPTISTE CLAMENCE, formerly a lawyer, presently a judge-penitent

AN UNIDENTIFIED LISTENER

THE PROPRIETOR OF "MEXICO CITY," an Amsterdam bar owner

Albert Camus' death in 1960, at the early age of forty-six, was completely unexpected; it was a great shock to those who had followed his literary and philosophical development from *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* to *Exile and the Kingdom*. Camus had broken with

tradition, had engaged himself in a new direction, and had shown vital and promising concepts of his new vision. His sudden death turned all his works into a huge fragment. He bequeathed to the world finished works with an unfinished vision. The spiritual wasteland of the

modern world obsessed his mind. He traced the dilemma of modern man back to its absurd roots, but offered no new alternative. He died before he could express it.

Camus had intended to incorporate *The Fall* into his collection of short stories, *Exile and the Kingdom*. However, the story soon outgrew its planned length and was published as a separate novel in 1956.

In *The Fall*, Camus takes up the idea of *The Stranger*. Jean-Baptiste Clamence is an intensified Meursault. The themes of *The Stranger* are treated with greater lucidity and bitterness in *The Fall*. The idea of death, the problem of indifference and anonymity in modern life, the notion of guilt and innocence in the individual, the awareness of the absurdity of human actions and the ambiguous relativity of all traditional values haunted Camus' imagination.

In form the novel is a violent confession, a philosophical confession of a former lawyer by the name of Jean-Baptiste Clamence, now judge-penitent. His confession differs in tone and attitude, however, from those of St. Augustine and Rousseau; there are no sentimental outflows, no softness of language, and above all no feeling of pity. Clamence makes his confession, reconstructs the past with all its small incidents, and intertwines it with the present; but his confession goes beyond the personal realm and assumes the dimensions of a general confession of the modern world, a cruel and dehumanized world where empty words replace life.

Amsterdam represents the stage of this modern world; impersonal and indifferent human beings play their role as lifeless puppets in the narrow-minded, suffocating bourgeois world. Camus even ventures to compare the concentric canals of this city to Dante's circles of hell. Amsterdam, and with it all modern cities, turns into a bourgeois hell. The ugliness and forlornness of the modern city build the framework for Camus' novel.

The book opens in an Amsterdam bar called the *Mexico City*. Jean-Baptiste Clamence is involved in a strange dialogue, strange because he addresses an unidentified silent listener who never answers his questions or comments on his remarks. The reader is kept in a constant state of suspense; he participates actively in the development of Clamence's thinking and finds himself stimulated to conjecture on the listener's unexpressed responses. Daily for five consecutive days Clamence, now in his forties, talks with this unidentified stranger whom he had met in the *Mexico City* bar. The subject of this one-sided dialogue is Clamence remembering Clamence, his fall from innocence to sin and the ambiguous recovery from his fall. The judge-penitent illuminates his past experiences, clarifies the inner motives behind his actions, and imposes his feigned friendliness, his humorous sarcasm, his false humility, his black bitterness and the cruelty of his lucidity on the reader. Clamence has to feel superior in order to make his life bearable. To give up his seat to someone else in the bus, to help a blind person across the street, or to give up his theater seat so that a couple could sit together—all these incidents created in him a feeling of superiority resulting in his regarding himself as a type of superman. His sense of superiority kept him in harmony with people around him, with life in general. He had attained a certain state of happiness as a mechanical human being who could anticipate what was expected from him and live up to the pleasant image other people had of him. He lived on the surface of a life of words and gestures, but he never touched reality through the people he knew, the books he read, the places to visited, the women he possessed briefly. As a lawyer he had realized that the monotony of modern life had turned human beings into puppets, had made them completely anonymous. Disgusted with their anonymity they would commit crimes, their only means of attracting attention.

Then one evening at the Pont des Arts in Paris Clamence heard laughter behind him; he turned around but nobody was there. It was Clamence laughing at himself, a sarcastic and triumphant laughter which chilled his existence. Something broke in him; his image of himself was shattered and he became aware of his double face. He went home to escape from the laughter but he could still hear it under his window. His existence had received a dangerous blow. The same evening he watched his reflection in the mirror and it seemed to him that his smile had become double. This laughter started Clamence's fall from innocence to sin. Somehow his usual confidence in himself and his actions had been shattered. The nonexistent sarcastic laughter had suddenly made his mind lucid, a lucidity which showed him the absurdity of his own existence. The recognition of his lucidity, powerful and convincing, channeled his thinking into a different direction. He gave up his position as lawyer and became a penitent judge. Human beings pretend to be equal and innocent but nothing is more natural in them than a constant desire to judge: it makes them feel above others. Clamence left his position as lawyer because he saw the fraud in man's concepts of innocence and guilt. But he soon realized that he was still playing the same game and had only changed his part. Clamence, who had formerly felt in harmony with life and superior to everybody else, now falls to the other extreme: he constantly accuses himself, insists on his self-accusations which elevate him to a new level of superior feeling. He achieves the same satisfaction as before, only from a different, perhaps more cowardly, personal position.

Clamence practices a kind of Pascalian diversion and self-deception. He uses the power of his mind not to get to know himself but to drift away constantly from his authentic self. His desire to maintain a feeling of superiority turns into an existential necessity. Diversion carries him through the recognition of his own ab-

surdity and provides him with moments of ephemeral satisfaction.

Clamence's diabolic laughter menaced his very existence. Once in a while it would creep up behind him and threaten him. However, not only the laughter haunted him, but also the memory of the woman who drowned herself lurks like a lion in the back of his mind. One night in November, two or three years before he heard the laughter, Clamence was crossing a bridge in Paris shortly after midnight and saw the slim figure of a woman bent over the railing. When he had crossed the bridge he heard a loud splash followed by several cries. He did not return to the bridge, informed nobody about the incident, and avoided the newspapers for several days afterwards. Here again, as always, Clamence had avoided the existential decision. He closed his ears to the immediate choice and walked home that evening the same way he always went. Clamence has only one weapon to overcome those moments of despair and failure in the past: the power to forget. Camus reverses the Proustian concept of remembrance. Proust wanted to reconstruct and revive the past; it imparted richness and happiness to the present moment. Clamence fears the impact of the past, it becomes a potential danger in the present. He remembers those moments where he failed to make the existential choice, and he has to live with the awareness that he will always miss his moment of choice. The novel ends with his expressed realization that he will always be too late—fortunately—to choose.

Camus, attacking the monotony and indifference of modern man, questioned all the usually accepted values and showed their ambiguous and often absurd nature. He revived the concept that nothing can exist without its reverse. Good and evil, innocence and sin exist side by side. Man must live with his own duplicity.

With *The Fall*, Camus opened the way to the *nouveau roman* by showing

the relativity of traditionally accepted objective values. From here it is only one step to the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, who destroys the concreteness of the ob-

ject and takes up the object before it has reached any kind of accepted connotation.

THE FAMILIAR ESSAYS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Author: William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

First published: *The Round Table*, 1817; *Table Talk*, 1821-1822; *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits*, 1825; *The Plain Speaker*, 1826; *Winterslow*, 1839; *Sketches and Essays*, 1839

William Hazlitt came to be regarded as one of the nineteenth century's most gifted essayists, but he did not arrive at this mode of expression by any systematic or logical process. As George Bernard Shaw came to writing drama only after long experience as a musical and dramatic critic and a novelist, Hazlitt discovered his true vocation only at the age of thirty-five, and only after years of trying, in turn, to become a painter, a political writer, and a philosopher. He had talent as a painter, as his portrait of Charles Lamb in the National Gallery shows, but his literary gifts were not displayed to good advantage in his writing until 1811. In that year he and his family (he had married Sarah Stoddart in 1808, and had one son by then) were clinging to an impecunious existence in London when a series of lectures helped relieve his financial worries. Through the aid of Charles Lamb, Hazlitt entered, at the age of thirty-four, a crucial apprenticeship as a reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*. He worked for a year in the gallery of the House of Commons. By the next year he had finished his apprenticeship and begun the career as an essayist that was to suit him so well. His books up to now, among which may be mentioned his *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, the *Life of Holcroft*, had brought him little fame or fortune, but in the shorter essay he found the kind of form that suited him ideally.

Hazlitt's familiar essay appeared in numerous periodicals between 1812 and his death in 1830. Many of them were

reprinted in his lifetime but even in the Centenary Edition they are scattered over twenty-one volumes. Some of the major periodicals for which he wrote were Leigh Hunt's *The Examiner*, 1814-1817; Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine*, 1818; John Scott's *London Magazine*, 1820-1822; Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*, 1822; and Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt's *The Liberal*, 1822. Important collections containing his familiar essays which were published during his life include *The Round Table* (with Leigh Hunt), 1815; *Table Talk* (2 volumes), 1821-22; and *The Plain Speaker*, 1826.

It is nearly impossible to give an accurate idea of the range of Hazlitt's interests, but literature, painting, the drama, travel, and the oddities of human behavior were chief among them. While he wrote familiar essays on subjects within all of these areas, those on literary or art topics are not ordinarily treated with those on human experience, men, manners, and customs of different countries—his favorite areas for exploration.

Like all great familiar essayists, Hazlitt had but one subject: himself. Whether writing of books, a prizefight, or the necessity of hating things, his own reaction to his material was his subject. Thus Hazlitt continues to read because of the intriguing quality of mind revealed in the essays, a strange mixture of vivacity and gloom. He said of himself in "On Depth and Superficiality": "I am not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term a good-natured man. . . ." This assessment may be taken as an understatement. Although

cheerful and happy as a child, he passed through some crisis in adolescence that left him gloomy and morose. Irascibility alone is probably as dull as superficial optimism, but in Hazlitt it was coupled with an amazingly vivacious intellect, stocked with vivid recollections of a staggering number of books, penetrating in vision, and never tired of examining all aspects of existence. That such a mind should be linked with such a temperament perhaps accounts for the remarkable productions of his pen, which in their diversity, penetration, and vivacity of expression are unequaled. His unusual temperament affected several aspects of his essays: it lent a distinctive cast to his style and it made him eschew rigid, formal structure in favor of a more casual organization.

One objection to his informal essays is their lack of structure. Perhaps Hazlitt's inability to succeed as a writer of books may be traced to the same deficiency. In any case it is a rare Hazlitt essay that seems tightly structured. His famous "Merry England" will serve as an example. He suggests his thesis in the first paragraph: English merriment is deeper than that of other countries because the English are forced to overcome gloom in the attainment of it. Merriment in England is not a sort of National Constant as it is, according to Hazlitt, in Spain and other southern nations; it is "that sort of intermittent, fitful, irregular gaiety." The paragraphs that follow, however, seem determined by whatever aspects of English life moved Hazlitt to speak, not by any conscious attempt to support his generalization logically. From this development, Hazlitt's basic writing scheme may be suggested. After stating a purpose or a case for investigation, he built his essay not by the use of a point-by-point argument or even by the careful organization of evidence but by a spirited but unmethodical piling up of examples. When the pile grew great enough, he simply stopped writing. He was saved from this structural embarrassment when his sub-

ject naturally lent form to his writing. "The Fight," perhaps his most famous familiar essay, is an account of his journey to Hungerford in Berkshire to see a prizefight involving Neate and Hickman. The chronological nature of the experience which involved several clearly separate stages in addition to the fight itself, led Hazlitt to structure the essay in a somewhat relaxed chronological order and so produce one of his few tightly knit essays.

This flaw has hardly been fatal, however. One is hardly conscious of Hazlitt's structural peregrinations in his best essays for two intimately connected reasons: his style and his attitude toward his readers. His style was the mirror of the man: restless, impetuous, virile. In "On Reading Old Books" he revealed several of his ideas on style; he called true eloquence "a man pouring out his mind on paper." He disliked the refined, polished, balanced style of Dr. Johnson or Junius. His stylistic mentor, he says, was Burke, whose "style was forked and playful as lightning, crested like the serpent." Like his mentor, Hazlitt admired warmth of expression, and there is a definite degree of emotion in all his writings. He is rarely gay and never asks us to weep; but sorrow, joy, and anger in subdued forms do lend warmth to his essays, as in this frank expression of emotion from "On the Spirit of Obligations."

In all these pretended demonstrations of an overanxiety for our welfare, we may detect a great deal of spite and ill-nature lurking under the disguise of a friendly and officious zeal. It is wonderful how much love of mischief and rankling spleen lies at the bottom of the human heart, and how a constant supply of gall seems as necessary to the health and activity of the mind as of the body.

Hazlitt's style is also distinguished by the feeling of sincerity it establishes. The language is that of a cultured man of wide experience; he uses many quotations and allusions to writers from ancient

Greece to those of his own day. Above all, Hazlitt manages nearly always to avoid the common pitfalls of the familiar essayist: glib superficiality and pompous sentimentality. He was able to move on a safe course by means of his hard, bright intellect which helped create an attractive, sincere style.

In his relationship with his audience, Hazlitt neither condescends nor is overly familiar. He is frank and engaging, but never whispers "dear reader" in our ear. The "I" of the familiar essays belongs to a well-read, well-traveled student of life who expresses his beliefs boldly. Perhaps a quotation from "On the Ignorance of the Learned" will give some idea of the frankness of Hazlitt's expression and the nature of his attitude toward his audience:

Women have often more of what is called *good sense* than men. They have

fewer pretensions; are less implicated in theories; and judge objects more from their immediate and involuntary impression on the mind, and, therefore, more truly and naturally. They cannot reason wrong; for they do not reason at all. They do not think or speak by rule; and they have in general more eloquence and wit, as well as sense, on that account. By their wit, sense, and eloquence together, they generally contrive to govern their husbands.

It may be, as Geoffrey Keynes expressed it, that Hazlitt's personality was as prickly as a quilled porcupine, giving pointed sharpness to everything he wrote. But neither Hazlitt's prickliness nor his lack of modern structural ideals seriously obstructs our appreciation of the products of a most remarkable mind that was honest, inquisitive, sensitive, and keen.

THE FAMILY OF PASCUAL DUARTE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Camilio José Cela (1916-)

Time: c. 1880 to 1922

Locale: A small village near Almendralejo, in the province of Badajoz, Spain

First published: 1942

Principal characters:

PASCUAL DUARTE, a Spanish peasant condemned for murder

ESTABAN DUARTE DINIZ, his father, a drunkard

PASCUAL'S MOTHER, unnamed, whom Pascual murders

ROSARIO, his sister, who turns bad

MARIO, his idiot brother, who drowns

LOLA, Pascual's first wife, who proves unfaithful

ESPERANZA, his second wife

PACO LÓPEZ (STRETCH), a pimp, the lover of Lola and Rosario, murdered by Pascual

SEÑOR RAFAEL, the lover of Pascual's mother

DON JESÚS GONZALEZ DE LA RIVA, a landowner killed by Pascual

SEÑORA ENGRACIA, a midwife

DON CONRADO, a prison warden

Camilio José Cela is sometimes acclaimed as the finest living novelist of Spain and a master of Castilian prose. His reputation in the English-speaking world rests on this novel, first published in 1942, and *The Hive*, published in 1948.

The novel is presented as if it were the memoirs—the confession, really—of Pascual Duarte, who in 1936-1937, just after the outbreak of the Civil War, awaits execution for the murder of Don Jesús Gonzalez de la Riva, who owned an estate in Pascual's poor village near Al-

mendralejo. The memoirs recount the story of Pascual's life from childhood to his murder of his mother on the night of Friday, February 10, 1922. The novel does not narrate the murder of Don Jesús. The memoirs were instructed to be sent, with a letter, to one of Don Jesús' friends, who left instructions in his will that they were to be destroyed. Somehow, they found their way to a pharmacy shop, where the "Transcriber," who arranged and censored them, found them. All this information, along with two letters elicited by the "Transcriber" from a chaplain and a guard who witnessed Pascual's execution, are presented as documents authenticating the story.

Pascual writes of his impoverished childhood as the son of a drunkard who died of rabies the night after Pascual's mother bore her idiot child, Mario. His mother, probably to get money, had an affair with Señor Rafael, and there is a vivid account of the Sunday when Mario, in a fit reminiscent of his rabid father, bit Señor Rafael, who kicked him on the scars where an ear should have been. Mario's ears had been bitten off by a hog. Pascual's mother laughed with Señor Rafael over the incident, and not until Pascual's sister Rosario returned home was the child picked up from the floor. When Señor Rafael left, Pascual's mother licked Mario's wound all the night, like a dog licking one of her litter after delivery. Mario died six years later, given the horrid extreme unction of drowning in an oil vat. Pascual's mother failed to shed a tear over the death of her son. Pascual states that if he were to date the beginning of his hatred for his mother from the time of Mario's death, he would not be far off in his calculation. This note of squalid horror and profound hatred sets the tone of the novel.

On the day of Mario's funeral, Pascual impregnated Lola, and they were married. When they were returning from the honeymoon, Pascual stopped at a tavern and cut a man in a knife fight. Lola, hav-

ing gone on toward home, was jolted from the mare and aborted. Pascual, enraged, killed the mare with his knife. Their second child died of an evil wind when it was eleven months old. Pestered by Lola and his mother, Pascual left the village with a half-formed idea of going to America. Realizing finally he could not afford passage, he returned after two years to find Lola pregnant. Paco Lopez, nicknamed "Stretch," the villain who was Rosario's lover and who had tried to pick a fight with Pascual over that matter, had ruined Lola. She died after Pascual made her tell him the name of her unborn child's father. When Stretch returned to town looking for Rosario, Pascual killed him, almost by accident, on an impulse as haphazard as the murder of the Arab in Albert Camus' *The Stranger*. He was sent to prison but released for good conduct after three years.

When he returned to his village, Rosario arranged for him to marry Esperanza. They lived with Pascual's mother, who goaded Pascual and his wife. Esperanza urged Pascual to leave, but either through cowardice or lack of decision, Pascual continued to put off their departure. In a violent scene, in which his mother bit off his left nipple, he cut her throat. He says her blood tasted like that of a lamb.

Pascual is not capable of the high rhetoric of Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, or of the hero of *The Stranger*, published in the same year. His language is stark, studded with an occasional sharp, homely simile, and he resorts to proverbs for philosophical expression. However, Cela's protagonist may fruitfully be compared with Camus' Meursault and Faulkner's Quentin. Like Quentin, Pascual is enraged at his sister's defection, and like Caddy, Rosario ran away from home with the valuables of the house. In Rosario's care for Mario we see from an outside viewpoint a relationship like that of Caddy and Benjy, which Faulkner portrays from within.

But Cela never brings Freudian psychology into the foreground, as Faulkner does. When Pascual's mother rips off his vestigial nipple, for example, we are left with the brutal fact and no commentary. Like Meursault, Pascual speaks as a condemned prisoner, involved in the murder of his mother. In both cases it is not the mother's death for which the protagonist is tried. The placing of Meursault's mother's funeral at the beginning of *The Stranger*, and Pascual's mother's murder at the end of his memoirs, emphasizes the events as central to their works.

The principal differences between Camus' and Cela's narrators are their religion and their modes of narration. Pascual frequently interrupts his confession to tell of events at prison and of his increasing anguish and penitence. He wants to be saved. He calls himself a stranger, but not Camus' stranger in a universe of indifference. Some time after Lola's abortion, Chispa, Pascual's dog, had three still-born pups. One day, because she has the look of a father confessor while gazing at him, Pascual shot the dog. This was his first irrational act of violence, and its blood—together with the "thorn" which Stretch put in his side, provoking him about his relations with Rosario—and perhaps the six drops of blood on Mario's grave, the outcome of Pascual's conquest of Lola, give Pascual a background and history of revenge and love and death which in some way account for his actions. They constitute a morality such that Pascual is purified "in the blood of a lamb," his mother's blood. Opposed to this morality is the Christian morality which he finally appears to have learned as he writes in prison. The theme of the confession is the purification by blood of a morbid familial hatred, and the theme of the "frame," the story of Pascual's repentance in prison, is an attempt to overlay this theme with Christian salvation.

There are hints, however, that Pascual is not totally sincere in his repentance.

The "Transcriber" points out in his postscript that Pascual wrote the transmittal letter, which accompanied the manuscript, well before he had finished his narration. He gave the letter to a prison guard, instructing him to send it along with the manuscript to the friend of Don Jesús on the day of execution. In the letter Pascual says he has stopped writing, and is sending the story in order to keep from burning it in moments of sadness and despair. Both of these statements are obviously untrue. There is also a muddle concerning chronology and dates. Pascual says he married Lola on December 12, a Wednesday. The only Wednesday which fell on December 12, and which is anywhere near the proper time, is in 1917; but this date is three years later than the marriage could have been solemnized according to the details of time sequence in the narration. The fact that it was a Wednesday, however, is confirmed by the additional fact that the third day of the honeymoon was a Saturday. In prison, Pascual had the habit of fasting on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and the guard who wrote to the "Transcriber" said Monday was a fast day for Pascual because his mother had been killed on that day. But Pascual tells us he killed his mother on Friday night. This kind of confusion reminds us of the mixed-up chronology of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*. In neither case would the confusion be noticed except for the fact that both novels make so much of the order of events and the sequence of time. As a result, in Cela's novel as in Ford's, we begin generally to doubt the veracity of the narrator. Here the novel differs from *The Stranger*, for Camus offered no frame of memoirs, but a narration as if in the mind of the prisoner himself. Cela has removed the reader a step further from the actual events and has thus admitted a new source of possible untrustworthiness. When we learn from the letters of the guard and the chaplain that Pascual died

badly, we may doubt whether his Christianization succeeded in supplanting the blood morality of the hero. Perhaps, in the end, Pascual really is as estranged as

Camus' hero and comes closest to salvation as he screams for life at his execution for the murder of Don Jesús.

THE FATHERS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Allen Tate (1899-)

Time: 1860-1861

Locale: Northern Virginia, and Georgetown

First published: 1938

Principal characters:

LACY GORE BUCHAN, the narrator

MAJOR LEWIS BUCHAN, his father

SEMMES BUCHAN, his older brother, killed by George Posey

SUSAN BUCHAN POSEY, his sister

GEORGE POSEY, his brother-in-law

JANE POSEY, George's sister, loved by Lacy and Semmes

YELLOW JIM, George's mulatto half brother

Allen Tate had the misfortune to have *The Fathers* published two years after *Gone with the Wind* appeared, with the result that his novel soon became a literary derelict bobbing in the backwash of Margaret Mitchell's overwhelming popular success. Consequently the reappearance of Mr. Tate's book in a slightly revised version twenty-two years later was an event of considerable importance. For *The Fathers*, as *Gone with the Wind* does not, provides an occasion for defining the idea of the South and for critical reflection on the moral significance Mr. Tate was able to extract from his social scene and his historical perspective. That the novel failed to evoke any such response is shown by the reviews written at the time.

Reading these reviews today is an illuminating experience, as much for what they do not say as for what they do. The critics were on the whole sympathetic toward the book and generous in their comments, but one takes away the impression that many had not read it carefully and almost none understood the writer's intention. A number saw it only as a moving story of one family's tragic collapse during the Civil War; certainly this reading testifies to the richness of the

narrative if to nothing else. Others thought that Mr. Tate was dramatizing within a family unit the fatal clash of two social orders, the traditional society of the South symbolized by Major Buchan and the industrial society of the North represented by George Posey, the major's son-in-law. This conflict was viewed in all its dramatic tensions and implications, but with a feeling on the part of the reviewers that Mr. Tate had failed to prove the superiority of the Buchans' ancestral code over George Posey's anti-traditional conduct. It is possible to read *The Fathers* in this way, just as one can read much of Faulkner in a similar fashion, but to do so is to miss the point, so to speak, of a novel remarkable for its realistic detail, thematic extensions of symbolic reference, moral intensity, and passionate, historical sense of life.

Briefly, *The Fathers* presents a philosophical view of society and history within a framework of particular events. It is only natural that these events should center upon the Civil War, for to the Southern writer concerned with the life or culture of his region the war is the image of violence dividing its past and present. It is no longer enough to know what

that conflict did; it is also necessary to know what it meant. For this purpose the Civil War provides a vast controlling image which gives meaning to the facts of the regional experience, not only to the structure of Southern society but also to the code of morality on which it was based.

Before *The Fathers* appeared, Mr. Tate had already defined his position on the South in a series of essays written between 1930 and 1936. In one of these, "Religion and the Old South," he outlined his theory of history in terms of the Long View and the Short View. Within the perspective of the latter, all history reduces to a variety and confusion of images out of which it is possible for us to make choices in reconstructing the scene or the period. The opposed view sees history as idea or concept, not as an account of the particular lives of particular men in a contemporaneous setting that often bewildered them, but as a record of events without accident or contingency or personal involvement and thus the world view, the destroyer of tradition.

Mr. Tate's own choice between these two processes of historical vision and thinking is as apparent in his fiction as in his poetry. The reviewers who found no real meaning in his novel were looking at history as an abstract concept of principles and causes. *The Fathers* incorporates the Short View.

The novel is spacious in outline, as any work must be which attempts to contain within its limits the picture of a whole society, and beautifully selective in attention to the detail with which people and places are described, habits of speech and manners are recorded, and the impressions made by events upon the mind of the narrator are carefully noted. Mr. Tate achieves his organizational effect, the configuration of theme and structure, by his skillful management of a special point of view. The person telling the story is Lacy Buchan, who as an old man is looking back on events that had happened almost a half century before. As a story re-

trieved in memory, the novel moves simultaneously on two levels: one the plane of action conveying with all immediacy the impact of events upon the consciousness of a young boy whose reactions to experience are direct and sensuous; the other the plane of reflection on which the man, now old, looks back on those happenings and contemplates meanings unperceived at the time by the boy he was. The ease with which Mr. Tate moves from past to present and back, setting up a relevant interplay between some event and its significance in retrospect, all the while causing the narrative to expand, its values to join and grow into one another, becomes one of the major triumphs of the novel. What is presented is a deep concern with historical processes and moral issues, but it is all done simply, without resort to the self-conscious or the portentous in association or image. The older Lacy reflects that only in memory and symbol can knowledge of the past be preserved, never in the feelings of the time.

Through all of Lacy Buchan's reflections runs the question of evil, but the problems of sin, responsibility, and guilt remain shadowy and unresolved. He wonders why life cannot change without entangling many lives, why the innocent, for example, lose their innocence and become violent or evil, thus causing change. He reflects that just as man needs to recognize the innate nature of evil in human nature, there is also need to face that same evil, symbolized by darkness and imaged by man alone.

The image at the center of *The Fathers* is the family, the social unit which, with all its widespread connections of kinship, was the foundation of Southern society; and the story tells how the Buchan family of Fairfax County, Virginia, is weakened and disrupted by the fierce energies of George Posey, the son-in-law for whom all life, because he cannot recognize, or submit to, the authority that tradition imposes, becomes impulse and motion. In later years Lacy always thinks of him as a horseman galloping over an

abyss, a man of courage and generosity and charm, but doomed because his reckless and irresponsible deeds menaced himself as well as family unity and social order.

Lacy reflects that the Poseys possessed more refinement than the Buchans but were less civilized. This difference is emphasized at the beginning of the novel when Major Buchan, at the time of his wife's funeral, plays the role of the gracious host and not the bereaved husband; he is merely upholding the accepted code of good manners. In much the same way he leaves his place in his wife's funeral procession to take the hand of Mrs. Buchan's colored maid and draw her, immediately behind the coffin, into the line of mourners. George Posey, on the other hand, orders his horse saddled and rides away, unable to face the idea of death. Another trait which he displays is a heartless disregard for others, as when he sells his mulatto half brother in order to buy a blood mare, an act which involves the Buchans and Poseys in a family catastrophe even more devastating than the disunion caused by the Civil War. Before the end of the novel he has destroyed the Buchans' agrarian economy, killed his brother-in-law Semmes, driven his wife mad, brought about his sister's ruin, and caused his father-in-law's death.

The point to emphasize in connection with George Posey is this: he is neither a villain by nature nor a symbol of Northern capitalism assaulting Southern tradition. He stands for that element in Southern life which was wild and undisciplined from the beginning, just as Semmes Buchan's weakness and John Langdon's violence were a part of the tradition as well. In Mr. Tate's view, apparently, the old order was already cor-

rupted from within before the Civil War destroyed it from without. (This is Faulkner's belief as well.) Whether that way of life truly satisfied the needs of the men who created it is a matter of relative unimportance. What is important is the fact that the traditional order established sanctions and defined virtues and obligations by which for a time men could assume the social and moral responsibilities of their humanity; it set up a concept of truth which made the human effort seem worth while. Major Buchan recognizes these sanctions and obligations and acts accordingly, but George Posey does not; therefore he corrupts or destroys all who come in contact with him.

This is the meaning of the episode in which Lacy Buchan, semi-delirious with fever, imagines that he and his dead grandfather are sitting on a pile of fence rails while the old man retells the myth of Jason and Medea. The scene is poetically conceived and morally instructive. Jason's fate, the old man says, was to secure the Golden Fleece or attempt some impossible feat, at the same time becoming involved with the humanity of others whom in the end he betrayed not through his intention but through his nature. The old man says of George Posey that he never really intends to commit evil; his flaw is the lack of will to do good. Thus the only expectancy possible for him is loneliness and the grave.

The Fathers is a novel in which the private life of the family and the public life of action converge upon a decisive moment in history, the outbreak of the Civil War. Its importance as fiction is its power to illuminate, through realistic detail and symbolic extension, the meaning of the past and the shape of the future.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Type of work: Novel

Author: J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-)

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Type of plot: Epic romance

Time of plot: The Third Age in a remote legendary past

Locale: The Middle-Earth between the Northern Waste and Sutherland

First published: 1954

Principal characters:

BILBO BAGGINS, the finder of the One Ring, a famous hobbit of the Shire

FRODO BAGGINS, his young kinsman and heir, the chosen Ring-bearer

MERIALDOC BRANDYBUCK (MERRY), Frodo's cousin from Buckland

PEREGRIN TOOK (PIPPIN), another of Frodo's cousins

SAMWISE GAMGEE (SAM), Frodo's loyal servant, also a hobbit

GANDALF THE GREY (MITHRANDIR), a venerable wizard

ARAGORN (STRIDER), a ranger, the descendant of kings

BOROMIR, the son of Denethor of Gondor, a heroic warrior

GIMLI, the son of Glóin, a warlike dwarf

LEGOLAS, a wood elf, son of King Thranduil of Mirkwood

ELROND HALFELVEN, the ruler of Rivendell

GALADRIEL, the Elf Queen of Lothlórien

SAURON, the Dark Lord, maker of the One Ring and the supreme agent of evil in the Middle-Earth

Critique:

Samuel Johnson is credited with saying that "A book should teach us to enjoy life or to endure it." J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* teaches both. It also fits the dictum of another writer, Robert Louis Stevenson: "And this is the particular triumph of the artist—not to be true merely, but to be lovable; not simply to convince, but to enchant." Tolkien has been compared with Lodovico Ariosto and with Edmund Spenser. Indeed, he is in the mainstream of the writers of epic and romance from the days of Homer. His work is deeply rooted in the great literature of the past and seems likely itself to be a hardy survivor resistant to time. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first volume of *The Lord of the Rings*, Celeborn the Elf King (no doubt speaking for his author) warns against despising the lore that has survived from distant years; for old wives' tales may be the repositories of needful wisdom. Although *The Lord of the Rings* is advertised as a trilogy, with each volume bearing a different title, it is really a single, continuous romance. The author is in complete control of his copious material. He has created a consistent world with a sharply realized geography, even

furnishing maps; he has worked out a many-centuried time scheme, summarizing the chronology in an appendix to the third volume, *The Return of the King*. (The second volume is *The Two Towers*.) With fertile inventiveness Tolkien has poured out an amazing number of well-drawn characters and adventures; and his memory of the persons, places, and events of his creation is almost incredible. If there are any loose ends in the three volumes, they are so minor as to be negligible. The book has been pronounced an allegory; with equal positiveness it has been pronounced *not* an allegory. At any rate, it is a gigantic myth of the struggle between good and evil. The author first presented his invented creatures, the hobbits or halflings, in an early book, *The Hobbit*, to which *The Lord of the Rings* is a sequel, but a sequel with significant differences. Hobbits are small, furry-footed humanoids with a delight in simple pleasures and a dislike of the uncomfortable responsibilities of heroism. They share the world with men, wizards, elves, dwarfs, trolls, orcs, and other creatures. Although many of these creatures are not the usual figures of the contemporary novel, the thoughtful reader can find

applications to inhabitants and events of the current world, which has its share of traitors, time-servers, and malice-driven demi-devils, and is not completely destitute of men of good will and heroes. Of the three volumes, *The Fellowship of the Ring* has the widest variation in tone: it begins with comedy and domestic comfort, then moves into high adventure, peril, and sorrow. Occasional verses appear in the pages, but the quality of Tolkien's poetry is in both his prose and his verse.

The Story:

Bilbo Baggins, most adventurous hobbit of the Shire, planned to celebrate his hundred-and-eleventh birthday. His old friend Gandalf the Grey, a wizard with special control over fire, tried to restrain him from using his magic ring to vanish at the end of the party. Gandalf was disturbed, for he suspected the ring of being the One Ring forged by Sauron, the Dark Lord, in the volcanic fires of Mount Doom. This Ring gave long life, but corrupted its user. Even Bilbo, who had gained it without losing pity, had begun to show signs of its evil influence. On his departure, however, after his spectacular vanishing, he left his property, reluctantly including the Ring, to his nephew Frodo. Gandalf warned Frodo of its dangers and advised that he take it from the Shire.

Frodo left the Shire accompanied by his loyal servant Sam Gamgee and two of his cousins, Merry and Pippin. Pursued by fearful Black Riders, they narrowly escaped destruction in the Old Forest, but they were rescued by jovial, earthy Tom Bombadil, who proved to be immune to the Ring's power. He sent them on their way refreshed.

At Bree they met a mysterious ranger called Strider and found a letter from Gandalf urging them to go to Rivendell with Strider, whose real name was Aragorn. On their fourth night out of Bree they were attacked by Black Riders. In terror Frodo put on the Ring and became

invisible to his friends but visible and vulnerable to the Riders, Sauron's Ring-wraiths. Their leader stabbed Frodo with a weapon that broke off in the wound and melted. Aragorn drove them off with torches, and the company hastened toward Rivendell. Glorfindel, an elf, met them and put Frodo on his horse. At the Ford near Rivendell, the Riders tried to intercept him but were thwarted by a flood.

Frodo recovered consciousness to find Gandalf with him and to learn that Elrond of Rivendell had been treating his fearful wound for days. In Rivendell Frodo found Bilbo and met Elrond, his daughter Arwen Evenstar, and others, including Glóin, an elderly dwarf who had formerly accompanied Bilbo. Elrond called a Council to discuss the Ring. At the Council, aside from Elrond's eleven subjects, were Legolas, a wood elf; Glóin and his son Gimli; Gandalf; the five hobbits; Aragorn and a noble gray-eyed warrior, Boromir of Gondor. Elrond recounted the history of the Rings of Power made by elvensmiths in the Second Age and of Sauron's secret forging of a Ring to rule and bind all the rest. In that age Sauron had been overthrown by an alliance of men and elves, and Isildur had cut off the Dark Lord's finger and taken the Ring. Later it had slipped from his finger and betrayed him to the orcs. Years later it had been found in the river by Deagol, a hobbit whose kinsman Smeagol had murdered him for it and fled underground, becoming the repulsive Gollum. Bilbo had found it underground. Pitying the murderous Gollum, he had not killed him but had merely used the Ring to escape. Sauron, though defeated, had not been destroyed. He had gathered an evil host in Mordor and was seeking the Ring to make himself ruler of the world. Gandalf told of the treachery of Saruman the White, leader of the wizards, who had imprisoned Gandalf. Gandalf had escaped with the help of Gwaihir, King of the Eagles.

The Council decided to send the Ring

to Mordor to unmake it in the fires of Mount Doom, the only heat which could destroy it. Frodo reluctantly volunteered to remain the Ring-bearer. Eight others were chosen to complete the Fellowship of the Ring: Gandalf, Aragorn, Boromir, Gimli, Legolas, Sam, Merry, and Pippin. Aragorn's broken sword, Andúril, was reforged by the elves. Bilbo gave Frodo his elven sword Sting and a mail-coat of mithril, a precious light metal harder than steel. Frodo wore it under his weather-stained clothes.

The travelers passed through cold barren country and tried to cross over the Misty Mountains, but a blizzard drove them back and they were attacked by wolves. Gandalf drove away the wolves with magic fire and led the company into the Caverns of Moria, the ancient dwarf kingdom. He told them of Durin, the dwarf king, and his people who delved so deeply for Mithril that they roused a terrible being that destroyed them. Bilbo's old companion Balin had led a company of dwarfs from the Lonely Mountains to retake Moria. The travelers found Balin's tomb and signs of a terrible battle, also a blood-stained, tattered book from which Gandalf was able to reconstruct the fortunes of Balin's people to the beginning of their last battle.

A drum far below signaled an attack by orcs and trolls. The Fellowship repelled the first attack, but Frodo was struck down by a spear thrust. His mithril-coat saved him. When they were forced to retreat, Gandalf remained to hold a stone door. Something opposed his will fiercely, and the door was shattered. They hastened to a narrow stone bridge across an abyss. A monstrous fire demon appeared. Gandalf opposed him and destroyed the bridge, but was dragged into

the cleft by the falling monster. Heavy-hearted, the Fellowship followed Aragorn to Lothlórien, home of high elves.

Lothlórien was a haven more wonderful than Rivendell. The ageless beauty of Queen Galadriel charmed them all, especially Gimli, in spite of ancient enmity between elves and dwarfs. Boromir alone was uneasy in her presence. On their departure she gave them precious gifts, and the elves supplied them with boats and provisions to continue their journey by water down the Anduin River. They soon learned they were being followed by Gollum, once owner of the Ring, now apparently Sauron's spy. They were again attacked by orcs, led by a Ring-wraith on a flying mount like a pterodactyl. Legolas gained respite for them by killing the mount with an arrow. After this escape, the evil of the Ring corrupted Boromir, who attempted to take it from Frodo. In order to escape him, Frodo put on the Ring and vanished. Boromir returned sadly to the company in a penitent mood. They scattered to look for Frodo.

Alone and invisible, Frodo tried to decide on the right course of action. Suddenly he was aware of an evil Eye searching for him, and he was paralyzed with terror; then an inner voice commanded him to take off the Ring. He regained control of himself and removed it. A groping shadow seemed to pass over the mountain and to fade away. Frodo then decided to take an elven boat and continue his perilous journey alone; but Sam anticipated his decision, discovered him, and begged to be allowed to go along. Frodo accepted Sam's loyal company, and they set out together for Mordor. The Fellowship of the Ring was broken.

FICCIONES

Type of work: Short stories
Author: Jorge Luis Borges (1899-)
First published: 1945

Only recently have American publishers begun to come to terms with what Vance Bourjailly has called "the lost books of Latin America." An Argentinian belatedly recognized as one of the great writers of the Hispanic world, admired in Europe since the early 1950's, Jorge Luis Borges has appeared hitherto in English only on very rare occasions in the pages of little magazines or anthologies. Since 1961, however, when he shared the Prix Formentor with Samuel Beckett, his English and American reputations have been steadily growing, as witnessed in 1962 by the publication in the United States of two books: *Ficciones*, a translation of short stories that Borges published first in one volume in Spanish in 1945; and *Labyrinths*, a translation of selections from five volumes, including *Ficciones*, of his short stories, parables, and essays.

There has been, of course, no criticism of Borges to speak of in English. Most French, German, and Latin American critics meanwhile find themselves falling back feebly on comparisons of his work with Kafka's, consequently involving themselves unnecessarily in the old so-called problem. As Eliseo Vivas has remarked, however, the Kafka "problem" arises from the confused demands made by his readers and not from any unusual difficulty inherent in Kafka's works. The same might very well be said of Borges, whose works so much, on a superficial level, resemble Kafka's: their apparent difficulty disappears as soon as one can simplify himself to the point of appreciating the significance of mere "plot." Borges once claimed, indeed, that the basic devices of all fantastic literature were only four in number: the work within a work, the intrusion of dream upon reality, the voyage in time, and the double. These devices become for Borges, as for Kafka, both technique and theme, form and content.

The most important technique-theme in *Ficciones* is the device of the work within a work, which Borges uses, al-

though with considerable variation, in more than half of the seventeen stories in the volume. Such stories as "The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim," "Pierre Menard, Author of *Don Quixote*," and "An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain," for example, actually take the form of literary criticisms or appreciations. In all three of these stories references to well-known writers in footnotes and text supply a counterpoint of presumptive reality to the basic fantasy of the rest of the text, a fantasy that in turn is directed, by the accumulation of circumstantial detail, at proving not only the existence but also the literary worth of unwritten works by authors who do not exist. Borges believes, in fact, that no writer can be original, that writing is essentially the manipulation of archetypal counters, that literary achievement must lie then more in the outlining of possible directions for these manipulations than in the actual production of a work. The nonexistent works therefore described within his own works attain, from the mere circumstantiality of Borges' sustained allusions to them, a level of reality, a solidity worthy perhaps only of masterpieces. This solidity reflects inevitably, in turn upon Borges' own works, giving them the fanciful strength and substance of so many Baroque monuments. There is no need for things as ephemeral as "characters."

An inheritor of Hispanic tradition, Borges is quite at home with the Baroque, and it has been demonstrated that his style is in effect a modern version of the Latinized Baroque *stil coupé*. He writes, that is, with a kind of jagged preciousness which the translators of *Ficciones* have often been at perhaps unwarranted pains to make smooth, a preciousness which, closely examined, reveals links not only with the Spanish of Quevedo but also with the English of Browne, Gibbon, Poe, and Chesterton. Nor does Borges deny these influences, holding as he does that there is no such thing as originality and that his use of

obvious sources can only make those sources themselves, in the light of the new context he gives them, richer.

Particularly devoted to Chesterton, Borges has given the creator of Father Brown a role in Hispanic literary history that far surpasses any he might have played hitherto in English, by basing works like "The Garden of Forking Paths," "The Form of the Sword," "Theme of Traitor and Hero," "Death and the Compass," and "The Sect of the Phoenix," for example, upon the particular conventions so skillfully employed in Chesterton's detective stories. All five of these fictions center around the solution of a problem: in "The Garden of the Forking Paths," perhaps the most striking of the group, one finds the solution to a puzzle in military history also supplying the solution to an inverted puzzle in crime, while "The Form of the Sword" and "Theme of the Traitor and Hero" provide intricate problems of curiously reversed identity. "Death and the Compass" stands as almost a parody of the classic detective form. "The Sect of the Phoenix" establishes an atmosphere of conspiracy that is dissipated, suddenly and surprisingly, only in the last sentence.

The image of the labyrinth, that archetype of all puzzles and problems, occurs again and again in *Ficciones*, as if it represented in some ultimate form the ideal of Borges' art. In "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," "The Babylon Lottery," and "The Library of Babel," one finds Borges constructing whole societies upon the basis of labyrinthine principles, erect-

ing complete social designs out of chance, choice, trial and error. If these societies seem to represent Borges' vision of man in relation to himself, however, stories like "Funes, the Memorious," "The Secret Miracle," and "The South" give us Borges' vision of man in relation to the only ultimate gauge he has of the universe outside himself—time. The heroes of all three stories triumph over time, achieving an immortality by the supreme exercise of those faculties that would mark them out ordinarily as being mortally human: memory and the imagination. In his short lifetime, Funes lives the imaginative life of thousands of other men, while Hladik and Dahlmann, the heroes of "The Secret Miracle" and "The South," bestow upon themselves the power both to postpone fatality and to welcome it in the end, as a part of an aesthetic order they themselves have created. They *are* the human mind.

It is memory and imagination, as well, that make Jorge Borges a great writer. He has, as someone has remarked, read all the books, with everything he read feeding the Minotaur of his mind. Like Vladimir Nabokov, with whom his attitudes, theories, and practices have a great deal in common, he was compelled to wait a long time for some sort of adequate literary recognition, perhaps because he, too, is so unabashedly an intellectual. The present need is adequate translation which will make available for English-speaking readers all the works of this master in their language, a language to whose literature he has shown such a dazzling devotion.

THE FIELD OF VISION

Type of work: Novel

Author: Wright Morris (1910-)

Time: Christmas, 1956

Locale: Mexico City, Mexico, and Lone Tree, Nebraska

First published: 1956

Principal characters:

GORDON BOYD, a middle-aged writer

WALTER J. McKEE, Boyd's boyhood friend, a cattle breeder
LOIS McKEE, Walter's wife, once in love with Boyd
TOM SCANLON, Lois' ninety-year-old father
DR. LEOPOLD LEHMANN, Austrian amateur psychologist, Boyd's friend
GORDON McKEE, McKee's grandson
PAULA KAHLER, a male transvestite, Lehmann's patient

In *The Territory Ahead*, a critical book, Wright Morris discusses a particularly American dilemma: the writer's nostalgic immersion to the point of immolation in an overflowing reservoir of raw material. In most of the nine novels before *The Field of Vision*, Morris processed fragments of his own material, searching for a conception that would enable him to achieve the kind of control and coherence he saw in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

In a deliberate act of rediscovery, he took a fresh look at recognizable American artifacts, archetypal American experiences—the young romantic's nomadic wandering away from and nostalgic return to the home place—and presented some of the most authentic Americana of the 1940's. Like Faulkner, he explored his own special province, the Nebraska plains where the fertile prairie grass fades into the arid regions. His vision was seriocomic, and his style made imaginative use of Midwestern speech patterns. *The Field of Vision* is Morris' first major attempt to get the fragments of his raw material into focus, to compress into expressive metaphors his conception of American Land, Dream, and Character.

If both the author and the artist hero of his early novels have become immersed in a nostalgia, unsettled by nausea, and thus need some distance from Lone Tree, Nebraska, what better vantage point than the Mexico City bull ring? An external experience has no significance, neither in life nor in literature, Morris believes, until by a deliberate act of consciousness it becomes an internal event. Morris' arrangement of this event is skillfully crafted.

Quite by chance, Gordon Boyd, a failed bohemian writer, encounters Walter J. McKee, his boyhood friend, in the

lobby of a hotel in Mexico City. To shock them, he takes the folks from back home to the bullfight. Seating his characters at the ring, Morris confines the present action to the duration of the bullfight; but in memory, forty years of the past are conjured up. He enters the minds of five of the characters: Boyd; McKee; his wife Lois; Tom Scanlon, Lois' father; and Dr. Lehmann, Boyd's analyst. Using the third-person point of view, Morris focuses certain external events through each of these characters one after the other in a sequence which he repeats five times. Some common focal point, seen from contrasting angles, provides transition from one character's mind to another's. Morris does not go into the minds of two other characters: Paula Kahler, who is traveling with Boyd and Lehmann; and little Gordon, McKee's grandson. Each of the personae provides Morris with a different perspective from which to view the American character.

In the excitement of the accidental reunion and of the bullfight, the characters are charged with the past and the immediate present. The phases of the bullfight and the presence of the others stimulate each character to recall an event in the past in such a way that it is possible for him to experience a shock of recognition in the present. The bullfight ritual, with its artistic, spiritual, and brutally physical dimensions, and the technique of shifting points of view provide Morris with a controlling framework that enables him to shuttle back and forth, weaving a tapestry of collective consciousness in which time present and time past form a design. Thus, the reader witnesses a double ceremony. As the torero and his bull move toward the moment of truth, each character comes closer to the horns of his private dilemma. To make the moment of

truth possible, the torero must risk being gored; the human mind confronting itself runs a similar risk.

But there is a contrast between the action in the ring and the events enacted in the theater of the mind. The events of the past are simple and cliché; Morris manipulates the clichés of our mass culture and language as a witty and humorous function of style working toward insight. McKee, Lois, and Boyd share (though each in the isolation of his own mind) the incident on the front porch in Lone Tree when Boyd kissed Lois, McKee's fiancée, and swept her off her feet. Neither Gordon Boyd nor McKee knows that Lois got up that night from her cot on the back porch and, sleepwalking, unlatched the screen to admit her dream lover, Boyd; in the midst of her dream, the cot collapsed. The hero's failure to appear in the flesh persuaded Lois to marry McKee, but she named her first-born Gordon, who named his own son Gordon.

In another act of audacity, Boyd attempted to "walk on water" at the sand pit outside town; until Boyd went down, McKee believed the hero would succeed. He witnessed a similar bungled act of audacity when Boyd ran onto the field to get a foul ball autographed by Ty Cobb; Boyd dropped the ball but ripped a pocket from Cobb's pants. In the present, parallel audacious gestures are made: for instance, a Mexican boy climbs into the ring to make the archetypal amateur confrontation with the bull that has just gored the professional.

In their childhood, Boyd was the hero and McKee was his major witness. He responded to the promise of greatness in Boyd. As opposites, Boyd and McKee are attracted to each other. They illustrate a dichotomy in the American character, two dimensions of the American dream: the man of action and the dreamer, the artist and the businessman, the power of fiction and the authority of fact. At Lone Tree the land itself, fertile to the east and sterile to the west, exhibits these contrasts.

Through the hero-witness relationship, Morris depicts an element in the American character which frustrates our attempt to realize the dream in a land of promise: the audacity that bewitches rather than transforms both the doer and his observer. To accomplish his limited goals, McKee, like Sancho Panza, must believe that Boyd (Don Quixote) is capable of success somewhere in the realm of possibilities. But in *Ceremony in Lone Tree*, McKee will escape captivity in the hero-witness relationship, though to no great purpose.

In his youthful enthusiasm, McKee extended this relationship to include Lois, whose own response added a sexual dimension. When Boyd failed to follow up the kiss, Lois (Dulcinea) saw that his foolishness would not end in wisdom. Concluding that most males are hopeless, her father included, she began to suppress her emotions. Ironically, Boyd now regards her as a typical example of the frigid Midwestern housewife. In Mexico, she almost bolts from her situation with a tourist, but he also is a man of mere gestures.

In the American experience, gesture is not often enough followed by the consummate act. Audacious Columbus, too, walked on water, but reached the wrong shore; Americans have domesticated a continent but are homeless. The audacious frontier hero survives in men like Boyd: the boy who once attempted the impossible has become the middle-aged clown who becalms a raging bull by squirting Pepsi Cola into its mouth. With that gesture, Boyd touches bottom. Aware that each of the adults has failed in his own way, ways McKee's grandson may imitate, Boyd makes a desperate attempt to pass the hero's charge on to his namesake, little Gordon. Flinging the boy's phony coonskin cap into the bull ring where the beast lies slain by a professional, Boyd lets the boy down into the ring to retrieve his cap and to take the risk that may transform the amateur into the disciplined man.

Observing the hero-witness relationship between Tom Scanlon and little Gordon, Boyd gets perspective on himself. The old man tells the boy tales of a bygone era of audacity. A fossilized victim of the past, Scanlon is reminded by the gored torero's cry for water of the pioneer trek his father led across the arid plains. His father, Tim, lying on a bed in a back room of the Lone Tree Hotel, so bemused Tom with stories of the great age of adventure that Tom now believes, in his senility, that it was he who went through the inferno of the desert and witnessed the cannibalism of the survivors upon those who perished. The witness has become the hero and both are defunct. Trapped himself in Ty Cobb's pocket, which he still carries as a talisman, Boyd knows that the spirit represented by such emblems of the past, including Gordon's coonskin cap, must be repeatedly resurrected in acts of transformation.

A different reflection of each character is offered by every other in the crazy house of mirrors that only Morris, with the complicity of the reader, can focus. As the link between the reader and the characters, Dr. Lehmann, an amateur student of life, is able to view at some distance the triangular Boyd-McKee-Lois relationship. McKee and Lois can see the similarity of the bull ring to the porch, the sandpit, the ball park, and the stage where Boyd's play, depicting those symbolic moments of the past, was performed: but while reality imposes correspondences upon the mind, keeping it moving over the surface of things, man must will the achievement of insights and concepts. Thus, Lehmann seeks connections. He interprets Boyd's dilemma in terms of Paula Kahler's. Having tasted the ashes of success, Boyd tries to make a success of failure—a typical American enterprise. Unable to cope with human nature, Paula changed her own, from

male to female, from a crippling compassion for people to a safer sympathy for insects and animals. Lehmann discerns the way a self-ventriloquism deceives us in our realization of the dummy in ourselves.

Morris demonstrates Lucifer's perception: "The mind is its own place, and in itself/ Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n." Thus, at the bull ring, McKee and Lois are able to see only what they brought with them from Nebraska. The human dilemma is posed in this way: just as no two people see the same bullfight, despite its element of artistic order, no two characters share the same field of vision. Though they may arrive at similar moments of insight, people communicate in terms of clichés, while the real drama, when it occurs, is an almost unbroken soliloquy. To each character, all the others appear to be mad Hamlets.

These missed connections are at once pathetic, because they foster lives of quiet desperation, and comic, because most of the characters are fools who persist in their folly to a dead end. Morris merely juxtaposes the elements that make perception possible, and while the characters themselves usually miss the connection, the reader is in a position to make it. Morris' art is resolved in the response of the reader, but it is as inaccessible to the inattentive reader as the moment of perception is to the purblind character. Lehmann, however, knows that the accidents and coincidences of a life essentially without design can be patterned by a conscious act of imagination; and he sees the pathos of the human inability to realize those rare moments of truth, those epiphanies. He sees, as does Boyd less clearly, that in such structured experiences man transcends impermanence (as in the bullfight ritual) and enters, if only momentarily, the realm of permanence.

FIESTA IN NOVEMBER

Type of work: Novel

Author: Eduardo Mallea (1903-)

Type of plot: Social criticism

Time of plot: The mid-1930's

Locale: Buenos Aires, Argentina

First published: 1936

Principal characters:

EUGENIA RAGUE, society leader born in Eng.^l and

GEORGE RAGUE, her wealthy husband

MARTA, their bored daughter

BRENDA, their younger daughter

SEÑOR RAÍCES, an Argentine financier

LINTAS, an artist

AN UNNAMED POET, a political victim

Critique:

Keeping several balls in the air at a time is a trick for a juggler. Manipulating several stories simultaneously was the feat of one of Argentina's most brilliant authors, Eduardo Mallea. Educated in a British school in Buenos Aires where he studied English and English literature, he was distracted from the medical profession of his father into that of literature. After his frivolous *Stories for a Frantic Englishwoman* and other volumes more like essays than fiction came a new style beginning with *Fiesta in November*, classified as "contrapuntal dialogue," that presented a number of characters, each with his own problems. Woven through *Fiesta in November* are references to the execution of García Lorca in Spain, in August, 1936. It exemplified such suppression of thought as the young Argentines of the novel anticipated and feared in their homeland. Mallea has been criticized for backing away from narration and substituting psychological analyses or philosophical reflections with the logical steps to a conclusion often omitted. This tendency can be observed throughout *Fiesta in November*, which contains two plots interrupting each other, never being obviously connected.

The Story:

The book opens with the underlying plot in italics. A young unnamed poet

was writing on a scrap of paper a poem on love. The time was eleven o'clock at night. Suddenly a violent, protracted rapping sounded on the door. As he went to answer the pounding he took with him a piece of bread. Opening the door, he was confronted by the leader of a patrol of armed men in dirty uniforms. The leader stated that they had come for him.

The main story begins at eight o'clock on a warm springlike evening in November. Eugenia Rague had come down the stairs for a final inspection of the setting for her fiesta. English by birth, but Argentine by adoption, she dominated her aristocratic surroundings as Cardinal Wolsey, whose portrait adorned her salon, had dominated his. There passed through her head the memory of the lack of respect shown her by Lord Burglay and Lady Gower during her visit to London. But now she had to concentrate on her guests about to arrive.

Others in the house were reacting differently to the hot evening. In another room, her husband, George, was trying to concentrate on acquiring culture through a phonograph record, but he kept thinking of how he could persuade Señor Raíces, after dinner, to sign a profitable stock purchase. Should delays result, he might lose everything. Intruding into these thoughts came those of his treadmill life, his wife's incessant pressure,

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and his own desire to relax and perhaps to dream. The arrival of the butler with the afternoon mail interrupted and infuriated him. Then it was time for him to prepare for the party. Marta, the older daughter, lay naked on her bed, wondering why she had spurned a high-born lover.

At nine, the lights were turned on, the orchestra tuned up, and the first guests arrived, the elite of Argentine society. Their conversation was frivolous: the latest scandalous behavior of some politician, the proposal to exterminate the unimportant lower class. The reception, with its empty conversation and the broken phrases from the more serious exchange of ideas revealed the waste of these people's lives.

Meanwhile Marta made her entrance, prepared for a boring and perhaps detestable evening among unexciting people she had fully comprehended several years earlier. Several young men brought her drinks, and her father welcomed her assistance in his social duties. When Raíces appeared, Rague gave the signal to proceed to the dining room.

In perplexity the poet questioned the armed men, asking what they could possibly want with him.

At the reception the painter, Lintas, rushed in, late as usual, but in time for the chilled consomme. As he drank it, he became attracted to Marta. Her sudden smile showed her reaction to him, but a pseudo-philosophic discussion prevented any words. Lintas noticed her distraught expression when her mother mentioned the fact that Brenda was not there. Only Marta knew of the appeal from Brenda to come immediately to give her assistance. While dismissing her curiosity about the identity of the man across the table from her, she tried to imagine what help her sister could need.

(At this point, Mallea devotes considerable space to the inner thoughts of his main characters, passages shot through by allusions to Ruskin, Pater, Hardy, and others.)

After the meal, dancing began in the garden. Lintas found himself dancing with Marta as though they were enemies. Later, more friendly, they discussed some of his paintings. Then she remembered Brenda and without a word of explanation she left.

Meanwhile the leader of the patrol began to lose patience. His men glared at the young man who was wasting their time. They prepared to march their prisoner away.

Marta's flight took her to a shabby house and into a stench-filled room where she found Brenda recovering from an abortion. Brenda needed her sister's help to conceal her situation from her parents and to supply additional money for the operation, which had cost more than the previous one. Marta left the house and headed for home.

At the fiesta no one had noticed Marta's absence. Rague and Raíces were discussing stock, and Raíces was trying to explain why he did not want to rush into the transaction. Eugenia Rague had maneuvered Lintas into visiting her art gallery to pass judgment on some new purchases. Amid a group of interested guests he pronounced them fakes. Lintas knew that he had created a conflict because Eugenia would have preferred a comfortable lie to the unpleasant truth. Marta, returning as Lintas was leaving the fiesta, offered to take him home.

Through the door, the poet saw a fighting cock belonging to a neighbor. He tried to imagine what was going to happen to him. He was suddenly frightened.

In the car, Marta felt impelled to talk. She protested against the sterility of the civilized universe and the difficulty people find in trying to communicate. When they reached his home, he invited her in. The screams of a neighboring woman started him on the story of his life. Poverty had engendered in him a hatred for people like her. He told her of a gang of ruffians who had beaten up an old bookseller because he was foreign and was selling "subversive books." It was his

widow who had screamed. This atrocity, making him feel for the first time involved in mankind, had increased his loathing for the governing class that permitted such crimes to go unpunished. They continued their discussion during a walk at dawn through the woods. As she left, they realized that neither had convinced the other of their beliefs.

The prisoner asked for permission to get his hat. What he really wanted was time.

Marta hated to go home. Brenda would be in a troubled sleep; her father would be snoring, and her mother would be sneaking down to the kitchen for a snack. Marta knew that in other parts of the world vigils more painful than hers were going on. She now realized that her trouble was a hatred of herself because of an unsatisfied yearning for something. Suddenly the thought came to her that she, who had always been served, ought to serve others. She paused at a church, but it offered no promise of relief. She stopped next at a coffee shop. Though sensing herself out of place among the

customers, eventually she began to feel a comprehension of them and a oneness with them all. She went home.

In her room she took stock of herself. She felt a resemblance to her country with its variety and abundance. Before she fell asleep she decided that a true change from the horrors of life must come from the tormented people themselves.

The final pages complete the subplot whose parts have been inserted. The poet's cousin had already been arrested and shot, and his family had been denied permission to bury him. The poet joined the patrol, protesting, but the only reply was rifle butts in his face. When they reached a deserted house and an open space, he tried to run. The patrol fired after him. He fell to the ground and blood soaked the piece of bread he dropped. One of the men turned over the body to make sure the poet was dead. The patrol, leaving him lying on the ground, walked away with feelings of loathing for one another.

THE FIFTH QUEEN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939)

Time: 1539-1542

Locale: England and France

First published: *The Fifth Queen*, 1906; *Privy Seal*, 1907; *The Fifth Queen Crowned*, 1908

Principal characters:

HENRY VIII, King of England
 PRINCESS MARY (later Mary I), his daughter
 ANNE OF CLEVES, his fourth wife
 KATHARINE HOWARD, his fifth wife
 THE DUKE OF NORFOLK, her uncle
 THOMAS CROMWELL, Lord Privy Seal
 THOMAS CULPEPPER, Katharine Howard's cousin
 STEPHEN GARDINER, Bishop of Winchester
 THROCKMORTON, one of Cromwell's spies
 NICHOLAS UDAL, Latin tutor to the Princess Mary
 THOMAS CRANMER, Archbishop of Canterbury
 LASCALES, Cranmer's spy

The Fifth Queen is a full-bodied historical novel, written in the grand Victorian manner, of the brief and tragic mar-

riage of Katharine Howard to Henry VIII. Many will remember Henry's first wife, Katharine of Aragon, because of

Shakespeare, and Anne Boleyn, his second, because she was the mother of Queen Elizabeth I. But the others—Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Katharine Howard, and Katharine Parr—are only dim ghosts flickering through the twilight of history. Moreover, the reign of Henry VIII has not been a favorite with historical novelists, for it is overshadowed by the greater age of Elizabeth which offers so much more to an imaginative writer. Also, the period of Henry is much more difficult for a modern reader to understand; it was not the high Renaissance of Elizabeth's time but, again, a twilight between the Middle Ages that were dying and the new age that was struggling to be born.

The story opens in the bitter winter of 1539, as the barges of the great officers of the Crown sweep up the river toward Greenwich in the wake of the king's barge. The new queen, Anne of Cleves, has landed in England, and already the rumor is that the king has said she resembles a pig studded with cloves and that her body stinks so vilely that no man can endure it. The inoffensive Jane Seymour had died two years before, having given Henry his long-desired son, the sickly Prince Edward; and the Cleves alliance was the next move in the complicated political chess game. It would present a strong Protestant front against France and the Empire. On the success of this alliance the Protestant faction at Court had staked their political futures—and their heads; and now the whole scheme was about to be wrecked upon the king's dislike for his new queen. It was no wonder that the Chancellor of the Augmentations, standing in the stern of Cromwell's barge, shivered with more than the winter wind.

To the court, as it lay in the palace at Greenwich, comes the heroine of the novel, Katharine Howard, in the charge of her cousin, Thomas Culpepper, to seek the protection of her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of Eng-

land and the victor of Flodden Field. She is the daughter of poverty-stricken Lord Edmund Howard, a younger son of the ducal family, whose house, far in the north in Lincolnshire, had been burned in one of the all too frequent local uprisings. By chance she is injured in a riot, outside the palace, between Lutherans and Catholics; by chance she meets the king and attracts his attention. She is appointed one of the ladies in waiting to Princess Mary, an appointment that will inevitably bring her into further contact with Henry. From that moment her life becomes a part of English history, with the headsman's block on Tower Hill standing grimly only two short years away.

The Fifth Queen is in the tradition of Shakespeare's historical plays. In most novels of this type, the main characters are the author's inventions, while the figures from actual history appear in the background to give color and verisimilitude. But here all the characters are real figures from history, even down to the Magister Nicholas Udal, author of the almost forgotten play, *Ralph Roister Doister*. So it is with Shakespeare's histories. Hence, a reader familiar with the history of the period is aware of much dramatic irony as the story moves along: Bishop Latimer, for instance, exhorting to repentance a friar who is to be burned for heresy. When the sinister figure of Cromwell appears, we know that the axe is waiting even for him.

Thomas Cromwell, the Lord Privy Seal, dominates the larger part of the book as he had dominated Henry for years. Hated by the old nobility because of his low birth—he was the son of a brewer—and by the Catholics because of his destruction of the monasteries, he represents the "new men" whom the Tudors brought forward to do their work for them. The few noble families that had survived the Wars of the Roses could not be trusted; they looked back to a feudal past wherein their ancestors had set up

and pulled down kings. But Cromwell, who had risen to power through his betrayal of Wolsey, looked to the future: to an absolute monarchy in which the king's word would be supreme. With his treachery, his network of spies throughout England, he is a revolting figure; yet readers cannot help admiring his vision of a realm set free from a renewal of the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses. He favors the Protestant cause less from doctrinal than from political reasons; he is politically astute enough to sense that the new Protestantism will offer a firmer base for an absolute monarchy than the old Catholicism. He served Henry by treachery and cruelty, but he served him well. Yet so horrifying a man is he that the reader rejoices in his downfall.

Among the characters of the second rank there stands out the figure of Princess Mary—the future “Bloody Mary” of history books. Ford gives an unusually brilliant picture of her: a girl so bitten to the soul by her mother's divorce and her own subsequent proclamation as a bastard that she is now only a rigid figure of hate. To good Catholics, she is almost a saint; to her father, she is a frozen block against which even his imperious will is shattered. And to any reader who may be interested in her reign, little more than a decade in the future, this portrait gives an illuminating psychological insight into the causes that made her the ruler that she was to become.

But above all, there is the figure of Henry VIII, this giant of a man whose vast shadow stretches over the whole story. As depicted by Ford, he resembles nothing so much as a half-tamed wild animal, at one moment pathetically docile, at the next, tearing into pieces those whom he had seemed to love. He is haunted by the fear of damnation for his persecution of the old faith, yet he cannot return to it. In the final dramatic scene between him and his fifth wife, she tells him what he is: a man who blows hot in the morning and cold at night, a

straw tossed by every conflicting wind. For all his absolute power and his cruelty, he is a pathetic and tragic man.

And there is Katharine, who has been called lewd, deceitful, grasping, pitiable in her frailty. She had only a brief moment in history, and historians seem to agree that she was “probably” guilty of the crimes of unchastity charged against her. Ford gives us a very different interpretation. His Katharine Howard is a girl too honest, too deeply religious, for the world in which she had to live. She sees men as only all white or all black; she sincerely believes that the old faith can be restored. Indeed, her brief reign did mark the return to power of the reactionary group, a momentary reversal of the triumphant march of Protestantism. But she is betrayed by everyone; even her uncle Norfolk, a hater of the new age, betrays her. And so Henry, who deeply loved her but who could never stay of one mind, sent her to the block on Tower Hill.

The real protagonists of this novel are, however, not Henry VIII and his queen; they are the old Catholicism of the Middle Ages and the new Protestantism of the Renaissance. The novel is set on one of those great dividing lines of history; and Henry himself has a foot, in its great square-toed shoe, on either side of it. He was half Catholic, half Protestant; he turned away from Latin because it reminded him of the old language of the Mass that he had destroyed, yet he wanted to be head of the English Church. The hands of the clock could be briefly stopped, but they could not be turned back. As Katharine is bluntly told, there is the unescapable fact that too many people in England have by now grown rich from the spoils of the Church and that these men will never give up the lands and goods that they have obtained. Even her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, head of the Catholic party and of the old nobility, wears in his hat a jewel taken from a chalice in the Abbey of Risings.

The new nobility, come up under the Tudors, is founded on wealth stolen from the Church. Here is a hard economic fact, against which theology and even Katharine's faith will be shattered.

Katharine, "mazed," as she says, by the reading of old books, moves toward her tragic end because she expects men to be better than they can be. Her world is not peopled by heroic figures from classical antiquity. Yet in the end it is she who triumphs, and Henry, who sends her to execution, who is defeated.

As was said earlier, this is a long, elaborate historical novel in the good old Victorian tradition. It has an immensely complicated plot—intrigue is piled up intrigue, incident upon incident, and hardly a character in the story can be trusted. Each is utterly false, thinking

only of himself, endlessly shifting sides, betraying and being betrayed. But at least these are full-blooded people, not the hollow men who flit, twittering like bats, through most contemporary novels—"these unfortunates," as Dante calls them, "who never were alive." The style fits the book. We are at one moment in the glare of torches and in the presence of the enormous scarlet king; at the next, plunged into the darkness of a corridor of one of these vast palaces. The warhorses, sheathed in iron, solemnly prance; the state barges slide up and down the Thames; Norfolk's tucket is blown in a triple convulsion of sound. It was a magnificent and a terrible world, and Ford makes it live again in all of its terror and splendor.

IL FILOSTRATO

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

Type of plot: Medieval romance

Time of plot: c. 1200 B.C.

Locale: The battle of Troy

First transcribed: c. 1335-1340

Principal characters:

PRIAMO, King of Troy
TROILO and
HECTOR, his sons
PANDARO, Troilo's friend
GRISEIDA, his cousin
CALCHAS, her father
DIOMEDE, a Greek commander

Critique:

Boccaccio took the episode of the faithless Briseida from Benoît and fashioned it into a metrical romance, *Il Filostrato*. Through his own imaginative genius, Boccaccio was able to take what had been but a minor incident in the story of the Trojan War and make it the center of the action. Virtually the entire story is Boccaccio's own, and consequently it is to Boccaccio that Chaucer is indebted for his *Troilus and Criseyde*. Though *Il Filostrato* contains none of the psychological portraiture of Chaucer's work, it has great

literary merit and is probably superior to Chaucer's work in its directness and passionate intensity.

The Story:

When Troy was besieged by Greeks who had come to avenge the rape of Queen Helen by Paris, son of Priamo, Calchas, a Trojan priest, foresaw the fall of Troy and fled to the Greeks, leaving behind his widowed daughter, Griseida. When the Trojan people heard of Calchas' treachery, they assembled to burn

her house, but they were stopped by Hector, who said she could remain in Troy.

Some days later Troilo happened to see Griseida at a religious festival and, overcome with her exquisite beauty, he immediately fell in love with her. In order to keep his love secret, however, he made remarks about the stupidity of love. In private he would praise Griseida's beauty and his love for her. Soon he began to fight fiercely against the Greeks in hopes that his feats would be pleasing to her, but she showed no signs of recognizing his love. With each day his pining for her grew worse until he could not eat or sleep, but spent his time imploring Love to tell Griseida of his pain.

Pandaro found Troilo in this condition and asked what had caused his grief. Pledging Pandaro to secrecy, Troilo told of his unrequited love for Griseida. Pandaro, agreeing that Griseida was worthy of such love, assured Troilo that he would, with his cunning, find a way to win the girl for him.

Pandaro left Troilo and went immediately to Griseida's house, to tell her that she was greatly loved by a noble and virtuous man of Troy. After considerable teasing Pandaro revealed Troilo's name to her. Though she considered Troilo worthy, Griseida still grieved for her dead husband, and she told Pandaro that Troilo's love would pass. Pandaro persisted in telling her of Troilo's miserable state, and at last she was convinced.

After Pandaro had accomplished his mission, he returned to Troilo and told him of his success. Troilo was overcome with joy. After praising Venus, he went with Pandaro to behold Griseida's beauty.

For a time Troilo was satisfied with the knowledge that Griseida acknowledged his love, but as his passion increased he desired more than brief glimpses of her. His grief soon returned. When he told Pandaro of his frustration, his friend suggested that he write a letter which Pandaro would take to Griseida.

The heartrending letter was written and carried to Griseida. Again she was hesitant, fearing that if she answered the letter she would appear immodest. Again Pandaro convinced her, and she wrote a letter telling Troilo that she desired to meet him; but once more her better judgment restrained her. Pandaro returned to Griseida after delivering the response and told her that mere words were not sufficient. After some argument he assured her that her reputation would not be injured, as the matter would be kept secret.

When Griseida consented to meet Troilo in a secret room in her house, Pandaro cautioned Troilo to be prudent. The young lover went to Griseida's house. Upon meeting the two lovers embraced and after a few words went to her bed chamber where they passed the evening in physical delight.

A few days later the two lovers had another opportunity to be together. Troilo again met her in the secret chamber, and once more they made love. They cursed the morning which ended their meeting and planned to meet again when they could.

The consummation of his love completely changed Troilo. He became even more fierce as soldier, and he continually praised Love and the happy state of those who share its bounties.

Meanwhile, after some savage fighting, the Greeks had taken many of the best Trojan warriors prisoners. Priamo was granted a truce, however, and an exchange of prisoners took place. Calchas, hearing of this exchange, asked the Greeks to give him one of the Trojan warriors to exchange for his daughter Griseida. He was given the mighty Antenor.

During the negotiations Troilo heard that Griseida would be exchanged, and, heartbroken that he might lose her, swooned. When he recovered, without revealing the cause of his consternation, he returned to his palace. There he remained, desolate and sick, reviling Fortune for permitting such a loss to occur.

Eventually he summoned Pandaro, who consoled him by saying that Griseida was not the only beautiful woman in Troy and that a new love would drive away the memories of the old one. Troilo, failing to respond to Pandaro's words, wished only for death. At last Pandaro suggested that Troilo ravish his love from the Greeks, a plan to which Troilo agreed, provided Griseida would consent.

That night Troilo visited Griseida and the two bemoaned their fate. Griseida suggested that the war might end soon and she could return, or, at the least, they could see each other during the truces. Troilo, not convinced, suggested that they run away. Fearing the loss of her honor, Griseida rejected this proposal. She told Troilo to wait patiently for her return, which she would arrange within ten days.

After a tearful farewell, Griseida was delivered to Diomedes in exchange for Antenor. Troilo passed the following days lamenting his loss until, at the suggestion of Pandaro, he went with his friend to a feast in order to make the time pass more quickly.

In the Greek camp, meanwhile, Diomedes had discovered Griseida weeping. Upon learning the cause of her sorrow, he convinced her that Troy would fall and her love for Troilo was unwise. Eventually Griseida was overcome by his arguments and his suit of love, and her

feeling for Troilo lessened.

On the tenth day Troilo and Pandaro went to the city gate. There they waited expectantly for Griseida's return, but she did not appear. For the next six days Troilo hopefully waited at the gate. Soon he began to lose his strength and became sickly. Then, in a dream, he saw Griseida being ravished by a wild boar that he believed represented Diomedes. Overcome by the vision, Troilo attempted to kill himself, but he was stopped by Pandaro, who told him to verify the dream by writing to his love. He wrote as Pandaro had suggested, requesting that she return or quell his fears, but he received no answer.

For a time he vented his anger in battle. Then he received an answer from Griseida, reaffirming her love. Troilo, still believing that she was being held in the Greek camp against her will, sent numerous messages to which she responded favorably. During a battle, however, a Trojan soldier wounded Diomedes and took from him a brooch which Troilo identified as a gift he had given Griseida. Feeling now that his suspicion had been true, he sought out Diomedes in battle and the two fought fiercely, but neither was able to overcome the other. One day, after Troilo had killed many Greeks, Achilles slew Troilo and thus ended the ill-conceived love between Troilo and Griseida.

THE FLIES

Type of work: Novel

Author: Mariano Azuela (1873-1952)

Time: April, 1915

Locale: Mexico

First published: 1918

Principal characters:

MARTA REYES-TÉLLEZ, a refugee

MATILDE, her eldest daughter

ROSITA, her younger daughter

RUBÉN, her son

QUINONES, a schoolmate of Rubén

DONACIANO RIOS, a prosecuting attorney

RODOLFO BOCANEGRA, a politician

NEFTALÍ SANCHO PEREDO DE LA GARZA, a poet

DON SINFOROSO, an ex-colonel of the Federal Army
 SEÑOR RUBALCABA, a schoolmaster
 GENERAL MALACARA,
 MORALITOS, ■ government clerk
 THE DOCTOR
 THE DORADOS, troops of Villa's bodyguard
 FRANCISCO ("PANCHO") VILLA, General of the Northern Division of
 the Revolutionary Army

During the Mexican Revolution, Mariano Azuela served in the medical corps of Francisco "Pancho" Villa's army. In this peripheral position he had an opportunity to observe the effects of the war upon every type of person. After Villa's defeat in 1915, Dr. Azuela escaped to El Paso, where he recorded recollections of the Revolution in poignant but frequently humorous sketches and novels. *Los de Abajo* (*The Underdogs*) is considered his masterpiece. *Las Moscas* (*The Flies*), a much shorter work written two years after *The Underdogs*, shows less biting criticism, less dismal skepticism, and more good-natured understanding of the author's troubled people.

Dr. Azuela joined Villa's forces with the hope of replacing the octogenarian dictator, Don Porfirio Diaz, with the young idealist, Francisco Madero, whom he believed to be the savior of Mexico. But Madero proved to be a tragic disappointment. His mismanagement, poor judgment, and ineffectual personality could not establish the looked-for democratic government based upon brotherly love and mutual trust. Those principles which had attracted Dr. Azuela to the Revolution were trampled asunder fifteen months after Madero, backed by Villa and others, entered Mexico City. Then General Victoriano Huerta seized the government and President Madero was shot. The next five years were filled with bloody battles in which the various leaders of the Revolution, including Villa, fought for supremacy. Villa reached his peak of power in the winter of 1914, when he and his generals occupied Mexico City and outraged the citizens with their lurid conduct. A powerful and well-

regarded general, Alvaro Obregon, disillusioned with Villa, pronounced Governor Carranza of Coahuila "First Chief of the Revolution" and drove Villa's forces out of the city. Villa retreated with his army to Irapuato and then to Sonora, where he was completely defeated the following summer.

Dr. Azuela's story begins in a railway station in Mexico City as multitudes of panic-stricken citizens who had thrown their lot with Villa are now trying to escape the city before Carranza's ferocious Indian troops arrive to take over the government. The station is full of puffing trains ready to carry the fugitives to safety. Among them, Marta Reyes-Téllez, the widow of a government employee of long standing, is trying to find her children and secure a place for herself in one of the coaches. She frantically seeks help from Señor Rios and General Malacara, whom she believes to be influential. The missing children are finally discovered in a hospital car where their mother and would-be friends join them.

The Doctor in charge regards the pompous family sourly but is unable to keep them out. Throughout the night and following day the Doctor remains the one sensible and calm person among the cowards and opportunists who are revealed to the reader in brief descriptive passages and in their conversations. It is easy to imagine that the Doctor of *The Flies* is Dr. Azuela himself, sketching a remarkable gallery of characters drawn from his personal experience after the fall of Pancho Villa.

The Reyes-Téllez family forms the central focus of the action in *The Flies*, for their presence serves as a unifying ele-

ment in this episodic work. They are the first people singled out of the crowd in the railway station and the last to act before the story ends. Perhaps, too, they are the most totally repugnant of a mob of unsavory characters, for they alone have not a trace of intelligence or good humor about them. Marta, the mother, has obviously sacrificed her virtue for security among the political butchers and bandits, as Rubén, the ne'er-do-well son, intimates when he calls attention to the resemblance between his sister Rosita and the governor. No wonder, Rubén comments cynically, the governor had been good to the family.

In Irapuato, Rubén chases down an old acquaintance familiar with members of the new government who may be able to secure the family once more. Rubén betrays the fellow into the hands of the police without a second thought the moment betrayal appears to be to his advantage.

Matilde is a silly, shallow girl who reveals her true nature when her pet canary is killed in the confusion of escape; her reaction is an example of adolescent emotional experimentation. She savors her grief by indulging in screams of profound agony of which not even she knew she was capable.

Rosita, sin's seed, follows her mother's example. At a very young age she is using her body to attract men in high places, hoping to be able to use them to her family's advantage.

The crass materialism of the Reyes-Télez women surpasses all humanity in the closing pages of the book. They push Rubén off the train as it leaves Irapuato carrying them to safety. The foolish boy is deserted with worthless Villa currency and instructions to find a place for the family in the new regime by using Quiñones, the very friend whom Rubén had betrayed.

Dr. Azuela's gallery may contain too many characters to be a completely successful one in so few pages. However, if many individuals are static types, such as

the Doctor, Rubén, and his family, others are charming caricatures.

The action proceeds through fourteen short chapters, each complete within itself and containing the revelation of at least one individual. The characters are associated by accident. Panic flings them together and fear keeps them together; but in spite of the seriousness of their life or death situation and their moral degeneracy, Dr. Azuela has endowed many of them with delightful eccentricities which produce a comic effect. In some cases this effect is achieved by the old device of using ironic names and then playing with the meaning. General Malacara (bad-face, or unpleasant-look), for example, is ridiculed by the ironic placing of his name directly after a description of his unfailingly good-natured smile. The humor in this word play is not lost in translation to the fortunate reader who understands the Spanish name.

A tribute to Dr. Azuela's ability to create a pathetic character is the portrait of Don Sinforoso, the arrogant, boastful ex-federal colonel. In public he threatens to kill an impudent young soldier, but when fate brings him face to face with the boy alone, he is caught literally with his pants down, and reveals himself as a blustery old coward. His days of glory long behind him, he cuts a foolish figure in his efforts to recapture the power and dash of his youth. His name, Sinforoso, is significant; "sin" meaning "without," and "foroso" sounding enough like the Spanish "fuerzo" meaning "strength" or "power" to suggest the Spanish equivalent of "Mr. Powerless," humorous in view of his boastful, militant surface personality, and ironic when contrasted with his inner nature.

Another character, although a minor one, deserves mention as an example of Dr. Azuela's technique of telling a story through character revelation. Chapter XI is ostensibly devoted to a council of war, held among Señor Rios, Colonel Sinforoso, the General, and Señor Rubalcaba, the schoolmaster. Señor Rubalcaba's per-

sonal thoughts during the council become increasingly more and more important, indicating the impossibility of disinterested group concern. A decision must be made as to whether the crowd should wait for General Villa at Irapuato or run to safety at once to some place farther from the capital. In the midst of exaggerated and heated debate, the schoolmaster absently meditates upon the loss of his love, Aurora, meaning "dawn." Again the name is played upon. It is not so easy to cast off the comfortable habit of a woman's company, he muses, particularly since his potbelly and attacks of gout make the likelihood of replacing her very remote. Here the decision being made, which is said to be of inestimable importance, is actually nothing more than the framework in which the author's real concern, that of satirizing the self-centered interests of the common Mexican during the Revolution, may be realized.

An outstanding comic character is Moralitos (little morals), a bloated, grotesque little monkey who runs about the car, flushed and wide-eyed with excitement, spreading rumors of certain destruction, and stepping on everybody. True to the indication of character suggested in his name, Moralitos is a great moralizer. Early in the book his ironic, ranting protestations of sincerity, honesty, and loyalty to the cause on behalf of the refugees provokes an apology from the Doctor which explains the theme of the novel. Speaking of the crowd, the flies that buzz frantically about the sources of power and wealth in the capital, he admits that they are no worse than they have to be. They are models of virtue when their bodily needs are satisfied; they are not to be blamed if their morality is inspired by their bellies.

The precarious existence of these people is threatened by every rumor. They have played amateur politics through three regimes and are in the process of throwing in with whoever wins control of the government. Their problem is one of timing. They must turn their allegiance

at just the right moment in order to fall in line for the best position in the new government. They are nervous, insincere people who twitch and fawn before every face on the political horizon, but with the possible exception of the Reyes-Téllez family they are not evil.

The message of *The Flies* is a bitter one which reflects Dr. Azuela's personal disillusionment with the war. The story mirrors a fundamental irony of glorious causes, the great dichotomy between political ideology and social reality. Each man sees the Revolution through eyes of self-interest and acts accordingly. However, although the human animal may be unable to rise above his hunger pang, he is not a total loss. The author seems to understand and sympathize with human weakness; he points to faults, but he does not blame.

Dr. Azuela's prose style in *The Flies* is journalistic in its direct simplicity. He relates the events in the station, on the train, and in Irapuato as they occur, in plain language suitable to his characters. The choppy, fragmentary dialogue is well suited to suggest the jerky movement of the train and the nervousness of the fugitives. While the author's language is not poetic in general, there is a central metaphor which runs through the work, enriching and unifying it. That image appears as a brief glimpse of a cock with flaming plumage, his head held high, his wings outstretched, perched upon a dunghill. A clear picture of pride and arrogance supported by a "dunghill" of past offenses, this representation in animal form is flashed in the train window to indicate the false pride rampant within the hospital car. Carrying out the image in explaining her family's incredible and unfounded snobbery, Matilde refers to her family's plumes which can cross a bog and never show a spot.

The final chapter presents an abrupt change. The town of Irapuato has been evacuated and the now familiar hospital car of assorted fools has departed. Pancho Villa's official train arrives a moment

later, almost exactly twenty-four hours after the story began. He is no longer the man in power. Silence now, not madly cheering throngs, greets him. The sun, says Dr. Azuela, died forever with Villa's retreat. The night murmurs that Mexico

is saved; but on the horizon the moon looks down, laughing.

The latest swarm of flies is now buzzing about Carranza. So it goes—a new government, a new swarm.

THE FLIES

Type of work: Drama

Author: Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-)

Time: Could be interpreted as World War period

Locale: Argos (could be interpreted as applying to France)

First presented: 1943

Principal characters:

ORESTES, Agamemnon's son and heir to the throne of Argos

ELECTRA, his sister

CLYTEMNESTRA, his mother

AEGISTHEUS, ruler of Argos after killing Agamemnon

THE PEDAGOGUE, Orestes' tutor

ZEUS, King of the Gods

THE ERINYES, the Furies

The Flies, the first play by Jean-Paul Sartre to be presented to the public, was well received when it was acted in occupied Paris. If one bears in mind that it is concerned with the problem of liberty, and that many of its references must have been pointedly topical in 1943, the interest it aroused is scarcely surprising. On the other hand, although *The Flies* has lost some of the immediacy of its appeal, the problem of liberty is not, of course, exclusive to any single age; and this play is still popular and frequently staged.

For Sartre, it is nonsense to speak of a universal human nature; only the situations in which man may find himself can be universal. Indeed, all of his theater involves a character moving toward a choice or decision in relation or in opposition to a given situation. The success of Sartre's theater—for it is principally through this medium that his name has become famous throughout the world—resides at least in part in his leaving his principal character or characters a considerable amount of freedom to develop in the course of the action. Moreover, he has successfully created situations which an audience will frequently find familiar.

The Flies is a play in three acts. In the first act, Sartre apparently concentrates on creating an atmosphere and on setting the situation. He achieves both of these aims in striking fashion.

When the play opens, it is fifteen years to the day since the slaying of Agamemnon. Orestes, Agamemnon's son, arrives in Argos with his tutor. He travels under another name, for Aegistheus, who has ruled in Argos since killing Agamemnon, had ordered him killed while he was still a young child. Orestes, however, had been saved, and brought up by wealthy Athenians. Curiosity alone can justify his visit to Argos, for his mother, Clytemnestra, now shares the throne with Aegistheus. His sister Electra is still in Argos.

It will be readily apparent that the theme of the exiled son returning to his native city is, to say the least, conventional. Yet Sartre enriches this basic situation incomparably. Orestes, when he arrives, has not come seeking vengeance: he is a tourist. Young, rich, handsome, and well-educated, he is free of obligations or commitments, light as air, and apparently reasonably happy to be so.

He finds a city in which the atmosphere is leaden and oppressive; he receives no answer to his requests for directions, and the first person to address a word to him is an idiot. It is as though a conspiracy exists to exclude him from the affairs of the city. In fact, the people of Argos are so involved with their own problem that they are quite incapable of seeing beyond it: they have assumed a burden of collective guilt. Fifteen years before, they had done nothing to prevent Agamemnon's death; instead of admitting their responsibility, they have wrapped themselves up in remorse. This uniform pattern of behavior suits Zeus, who steps on and off stage throughout the play, since it holds Aegistheus' subjects in check and leaves little scope for personal initiative. The presence of Zeus adds an uncanny element to the atmosphere in Argos. A sinister, persistent presence is that of swarms of flies, sent by the gods to plague the populace as a constant reminder of their guilt. Death seems to be curiously intermingled with life in this city of frightened people. Repentance has even been institutionalized: once a year, on the anniversary of Agamemnon's death, the "day of the dead" is announced, while, as an old woman tells Zeus, mourning cloth is the costume of Argos. Guilt and remorse, from being a wave of feeling that struck the city, has become a whole way of life, fostered by Zeus and by Aegistheus, that stifles any initiative and promotes only submissive credulity. One cannot help thinking of a similar attitude that the Germans occupying France and the Petain government did everything to encourage during World War II.

One person in Argos remains independent and defiant. Electra, though treated as a slave by her mother and Aegistheus, is rebellious. Contemptuous of the general fear and superstition, she lets it be known to Orestes, who has not as yet revealed his true identity, that she lives only for the day when her brother will come to seek vengeance. At the same time Electra is a pathetic and occasionally

childlike figure. At one moment she vilifies Jupiter with all her might; at the next she betrays her longing for warmth and affection in the questions she asks about other cities of Greece. When Orestes asks her if she had ever thought of fleeing, she can only answer that she lacks courage to do so because she would be afraid on the roads by herself. Perhaps because of her sex, or her youth, or simply the long isolation from thinking people, Electra too has a fixed attitude: a thirst for vengeance which does not ring true or confident when set alongside her gentleness in other respects.

As was foreseeable, Orestes becomes sufficiently curious about the city, or sufficiently interested in the plight of his sister to decide to remain a little longer in Argos.

At the beginning of the second act, the scene changes from Argos to a mountain slope outside the city. Here the people are gathered to be present at the rites attending the "day of the dead" and the release of the dead from the underworld. For it has been made known that a rock on the mountainside conceals the entrance to the underworld. Once a year, this rock is rolled back, and dead acquaintances of the people of Argos come back to torture the city's conscience. On this occasion, Aegistheus arrives late for the ceremonies, which he himself had instituted. The solid, impenetrable fear of the crowd begins to give way to blind panic, as they feel quite helpless without some leadership in the presence of the dead. After Aegistheus appears and the stone is rolled back, the crowd, men, women and even children, beg for pity and ask forgiveness for being alive.

Into this uncanny, grotesque, hysterical atmosphere steps Electra. Fired by what Orestes has told her about happy, sun-bathed towns elsewhere in Greece, she tells the crowd to throw off its burden of guilt. At first she is granted a hearing, for a brief time the assembled people listen hopefully. But she is no match for Zeus. Displaying his divine powers, he

sends the stone that was supposed to bar the entrance to the underworld crashing against the steps of the temple built on the mountainside. Awed, the crowd turns against Electra.

In this sclerotic society, whose organization has, for fifteen years, been hardened from above, no change from inside seems possible. It is significant that it is through contact with Orestes that Electra becomes enterprising enough to attempt a change. But Electra's only arm was words, and her effort, though noble, seems inevitably futile. It is to a considerable extent through Electra that Orestes becomes fully involved in the affairs of Argos and commits himself to a course of action. He reveals his identity to her. Electra, bewildered by the disproportion between her expectations and the Orestes she sees before her, cannot at first conceal her disappointment. The change is not sudden, but now, more than ever, Orestes is conscious of his weightlessness in Argos or elsewhere. Bitterly regretful, he says that he barely exists, for he is ignorant of the deep passions of living men and women. He affirms that he wishes to belong fully to the town, that he wishes to draw it to him. Still unsure of himself, however, he tries to appeal to a higher authority. Zeus, lurking in the background, is only too glad to suggest that Orestes continue in the path of humility. At this, Orestes rebels; he realizes that he must commit himself, that it is he who must make a decision, and that, in the circumstances, there is only one course which can be followed.

It is significant that while Sartre dwells on the importance of Orestes' decision to kill Aegistheus and Clytemnestra—for this is his decision—he does not make any attempt to exploit fully the dramatic potential inherent in the confrontation between Orestes and his father's murderer. The decision is in fact followed at a very short interval by the act. On the other hand, by means of a scene in which Jupiter warns Aegistheus of the danger to his life, Sartre lays bare the workings

of the latter's mind. Aegistheus too, though a ruler, is a victim of the image he has created for himself. Motivated by a love of order, all his actions have tended in that direction. Now, old and weary, the prey to some of the fears and superstitions for which he was himself responsible, he looks forward gladly to death; however, the thought that Orestes knows himself to be free can rouse him to indignation, for this freedom constitutes a threat to order.

Orestes' decision to commit himself by killing Aegistheus and Clytemnestra represents an idea at the very center of Sartre's philosophic reflection. In choosing, he in effect defines himself. Since his existence is represented only by the sum of his actions, he begins to exist in the fullest sense when he involves himself, and not before. Being the only person responsible for his action and its consequences, Orestes cannot appeal to any higher authority for justification or excuse. Orestes tells Zeus that he is the king of the gods but not the king of men. But in forging his identity, in falling back upon himself, Orestes is cutting himself off from other men. Free, Orestes becomes: this is his grandeur; yet, alone in the world, with his identity to create, he is condemned to be free.

Electra does not have the strength to follow Orestes. It is as though, in slaying Clytemnestra and Aegistheus, Orestes had taken away her one reason for living, her desire for vengeance. Zeus does not have much trouble in winning her over to the side of those who spend their lives in atonement. At the end of the play, Electra has become credulous, tractable, repentant.

The conclusion to the play does pose problems. In a speech to the people of Argos, Orestes claims that he has killed for their sake, to free them. He has taken over their burden of guilt, and they need no longer be afraid. Orestes leaves the city, pursued by the Erinyes, who will forever follow him. Sartre offers no explanation of where Orestes is going, or of

what is to become of Argos. If he had, it is unlikely that one could have spoken of *The Flies* as an existentialist drama, which in fact it is. In posing the central

question of engagement, this drama seems to prefigure virtually all of Sartre's postwar fiction.

THE FOLKS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ruth Suckow (1892-1960)

Time: From 1910, approximately, to the early 1930's

Locale: Belmond, Iowa; Greenwich Village; California

First published: 1934

Principal characters:

FRED FERGUSON, banker in Belmond, and

ANNIE FERGUSON, his wife, "the folks"

CARL FERGUSON, their oldest child, a teacher

MARGARET FERGUSON ("Margot"), their older daughter

DOROTHY FERGUSON ("Dot"), their younger daughter

BENJAMIN FERGUSON ("Bunny"), their youngest child

LILLIAN WHITE, Carl's wife, born and bred in Belmond

BRUCE WILLIAMS, Margaret's lover, a New York businessman

JESSE WOODWARD, Dorothy's husband, a bridge coach

CHARLOTTE BUKOWSKA, Benjamin's wife

ELLA and

BEN GARDNER, Fred's sister and brother-in-law

Ruth Suckow is a regional writer by the double achievement of her Iowa stories and her critical thinking about regionalism itself. The two come together in *The Folks* to transcend literally and metaphorically the borders of one state and present a detailed record of one family which in its aspects of saga and allegory stands for all families. The novel presents with honesty and realism the virtues and vices of small-town America.

Ruth Suckow's neat scheme of father, mother, two girls, and two boys gives her the six parts of the novel, arranged in alternating long and short lengths. Each of the short parts is lyrical in tone, presenting a static but attractive picture of small-town and family life in the first and third parts, and a more somber view of American life in the fifth part, which, however, achieves a minor resolution of faith in the country as a whole in its conclusion. The alternating longer sections deal with the specific problems of the provincial boy, the provincial girl, and finally of the transformation of the Fergusons into "the

folks." The novel explores the fullest meaning of that term by facing up to the difficulties of small-town existence in early twentieth century America, and it makes its point by using the four children to show four different problems, leaving Fred and Annie Ferguson to re-achieve small-town tranquility if they can at the close of the book. That Ruth Suckow convinces us they can and do achieve it is the triumph of the novel and its special relevance today.

The one problem in the structure of the novel stems from the careful balancing of old and young "folks" and of Belmond and the U.S.A. The first and last parts show how Annie and Fred begin as Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson and end as "the folks." To this end we follow not their lives but those of the four children in the four intervening parts. Each story fades away at the conclusion of the section as the child breaks away from home. None of the parts has as satisfactory an ending as that of "the folks," but each of the four stories contains ideas that could be

developed into a full novel for each child. Such a technical problem is impossible to solve within the limits even of a long novel like *The Folks* unless one is prepared, as in the case of William Faulkner, to add a note about their careers as an epilogue. This device seems unnecessary here, for the merit of Ruth Suckow's handling of the family is that it is realistic. Every family has its rise and fall; the happiest are those growing clans which do have their own "home place" and "folks" to return to when they must.

Part I, "The Old Folks," opens early on the morning of a fine September day, the shimmering Indian summer atmosphere that fascinated Henry James and Katherine Mansfield and seemed to hold true among the best families anywhere in the calm that preceded World War I. But Ruth Suckow, like Henry James and Katherine Mansfield, can sense that trouble is brewing. The Presbyterian Fergusons must support their dwindling church and their ailing "old folks." The interaction of family and town is most obvious in Part III, "The Loveliest Time of the Year," a description of Dorothy's marriage to Jesse, the incredibly handsome boy from out of town. The lyricism of the first part is again present, but a note of stern realism is now creeping in: the young folks begin well but end badly.

The deceptively small concerns of daily living and the restrained style, concealing as they do at first glance the human implications of the accumulated events, are probably the reasons for dismissing *The Folks* as a regional Midwest novel. In fact, its setting is America from Greenwich Village to Los Angeles, and its cast is composed of Americans from many walks of life, from several different racial stocks, and over a spectrum of generations from Western pioneer to newly arrived immigrant.

The historical spectrum is analyzed in the story of Carl; the geographical and social scope is covered in the stories of Dorothy and Margaret; the racial picture

is completed by Benjamin, nicknamed Bunny.

In Part V, "The Youngest," Fred and Annie Ferguson have seen all their children leave home and are now awaiting the return of Benjamin from college for the summer vacation. Aunt Ella and Uncle Ben Gardner, the salt of the earth or the provincial of the provincials, have retired from the Ferguson farm and live miserably in town. Benjamin arrives with a Charlotte Bukowska, whose parents were European peasants, as Ben and Ella are peasants in America. But Charlotte is also the new immigrant, as the Fergusons were years before.

The overwhelming problem of small-town life in America may be summarized from this novel as the decision whether to stay in the town of one's birth and eventually to turn into "the old folks," or to go out into the world. In *The Folks*, Carl and Margaret make their departures from the Ferguson nest but eventually return to make their peace with Belmond. Their crises come early in their lives. The crisis in the life of "the folks" comes in late middle-age, after the departure of Benjamin with Charlotte.

In a passionate scene with Fred, Annie reproaches him for all the failures concealed beneath the Belmond façade of "the fortunate Fergusons"; none of the four children has married modestly and settled quietly in Belmond, as Fred and Annie did. What is wrong with the children, with their parents? Then Annie realizes she has always been a stranger in Belmond, in the Ferguson clan, and when Fred announces his retirement from the bank the two decide to leave Belmond for a trip West in order to escape the harsh Iowa winter.

The time is the 1930's, or possibly the late 1920's, when hard times are beginning to be felt: the small-town aristocracy has collapsed in decadence; the young have fled to the city or gone West. When the Fergusons leave the bank, the church, the home place, and Belmond, it

looks as if the town will collapse. But during their journey all the Fergusons find is discontent and restlessness in Annie's sister Louie, in old Mrs. Spencer, once a neighbor in Belmond, and most of all in "the great Iowa winter picnic," a gathering of exiles that causes "the folks" to reject the false and superficial pleasures of California and return to Belmond. The news from home is bad; the rival bank has failed and its president, Belmond's first citizen, has fled town. Worse is at hand when they get back. But this is where they belong, and they have their home to come back to. With the reunion of Belmond and the Fergusons, and the reconciliation of Fred and Annie to each other, they have become "the old folks" and their house the "home place" of the Fergusons. The story of the Belmond Fergusons ends in the tranquillity with which it began.

For both Carl and Margaret this resolution is particularly necessary, though each uses it in different ways. Part II, "The Good Son," covers about fifteen years in the life of Carl, the oldest of the younger Fergusons; he and Margaret, the older daughter, are treated at much fuller length than are Dorothy and Ben, the younger children, and the experiences of

Carl and Margaret together summarize the life of the young provincial.

Part IV, "The Other Girl," is the longest in the novel and probably the autobiographical core of the whole book. Margaret is the provincial girl in full revolt, as is generally the situation of the girl on whom the small-town mores bear severely. It is a familiar situation, from *Anne of Green Gables* to *The Rainbow*, from Olive Schreiner to Doris Lessing, and Margaret eventually fights herself free of "the folks." The second chapter of Part IV, titled "Basement Apartment," describes Margaret's life and acquaintances in Greenwich Village, an animated and witty portrait of un-Belmond-like characters who, it turns out, are all in flight from a Belmond of their own. When Margaret's own rebellion ends, the way is clear for a younger generation to occupy easily the positions she fought for.

The merits of both staying in Belmond and leaving it are thus shown to be complementary, as they were in Ruth Suckow's life. The chief virtue of *The Folks* is that it shows how this struggle to achieve harmony takes place in the old as well as the young, and that both are right.

FOLKWAYS

Type of work: Political, sociological, and anthropological theory

Author: William Graham Sumner (1840-1910)

First published: 1907

Folkways, written by a professor of political and social science at Yale University, was one of the powerfully influential books on American thought during the first decade of the twentieth century. The book was an effort to soften the impact of and to justify the implications of Darwinian laissez faire philosophy. As such it was essentially conservative and ran against the growing tide of social and political agitation thrusting toward reform. Because it seemed to be so widely

and deeply based on comparative anthropology and sociology, it appeared irrefutable. Consequently its prestige was immense.

Although apparently clear-headed and based on reality, the book often hides its head in mysticism. Pushing the theory that the community cannot bear any responsibility for the acts or welfare of individuals—that in the world of nature red in tooth and fang each individual must shift for himself or founder—Sum-

ner insists that the origins of the community mind or soul or being, whichever one may call it, are shrouded in impene-trable mystery. These origins he calls folkways as a variant of mores.

He assumes that primitive man's first purpose in life is to live. The petty and individual acts of each person flow together eventually into patterns that then themselves exert controlling influence upon subsequent acts of various individuals in a group. These folkways, or mores, grow unconsciously, and because they are not purposeful and knowledgeable creations of man, they are largely unalterable. Only the upper layers are subject to change, and change comes slowly. Primitive societies are so constituted as to discourage innovation, variation, and development. In such societies prestige and political control rest with the elders who, having learned customs from their elders, in their turn enforce conformity and throttle liberty of action.

This suppression of change is commendable because the system works. The gradual development of improved folkways results from individual struggle for existence in the Darwinian sense, and the most effective struggle is that of "antagonistic cooperation," in which competition and combination alternate for a slow thrust forward. Failure to recognize this fact leads to various "socialistic fallacies."

Sumner's conservative philosophy is made clear. The folkways that have existed and worked are their own rationale and justification. They are "right" and they are "true." Because they are both correct and valid they are not subject to examination and verification. Individual "rights" are those rules imposed upon members of the "in-group" to make the society viable and peaceful. Therefore Sumner concludes, in a philosophy running counter to one of the great American political tenets, there is no such thing as "natural" or "God-given" or "absolute" rights.

Folkways exist on two levels, like two

ocean currents running in the same direction but at different velocities. The lower consists of the masses of people. They are the real bearers of folkways. The people are suggestible, easily influenced and controlled by the mores. They never change their customs. The classes are the upper and faster current. It is they who produce variations and account for whatever progress is made in the folkways. It is a fallacy to conclude that there is any mystical or occult wisdom residing in either class. The masses are not wise merely because they are the majority. Both classes must co-operate for their mutual good. But neither has a superior right to control society.

But inequality is both natural and beneficial. Masses of equal men can never progress beyond the stage of savagery. Sumner disagrees completely with the eighteenth century belief in the Noble Savage and the bliss of the state of Nature. On the contrary, men in a natural state would be equal, static in their society, and would ultimately be enslaved. Masses of men if they are not to be scattered and made weak and finally destroyed must be allowed opportunities to achieve their societal coherence by means of organization, leadership, and discipline.

All civilized societies have at least three levels. At the lowest is a dead weight of ignorance, disease, poverty, and crime. Above it is the "middle section," which interacts with the political institutions of a democracy such as the church, the press and public libraries, and reacts to them. This section of people partially controls the folkways because leaders in a democracy must cater to these people's tastes. This section would in fact rule the society if it were organized independently, but it never is. Education of the masses contains an error in thinking. The process of education is long and involved. It is not democratic because it assumes lack of equality between teacher and persons taught.

Therefore it works out only in the extension of popular interests and the establishment of popular prejudices.

Folkways are practically unchangeable by revolution. Forms of government may change on the top. A monarchy can be changed into a republic, but not the folk mind and practices. Levels of society are turned upside down and permanently altered. The folk return eventually to their ways. The folk recognize that some people must be aristocrats, a ruling class or classes. These aristocrats are those in any society that are distinguished. Their lives, habits, and leadership give direction to all movements and progression. The folk, recognizing this fact, repudiate the old eighteenth century notions of their perfectibility and laugh at the philosophers who preached such nonsense. These people recognize that they are incapable of thinking, that it is only the elite in any group who think and account for any progress made.

One example of progress is the institution of slavery. It was begun by leaders when they recognized that it was more humanitarian to enslave their war victims than to kill them. Slavery was good, for it taught steady labor to the slave, relieved the owner of hard work, and brought the slave into the "in-group" for which he worked. Slavery also demonstrated the human characteristic of the strong desiring to dominate the weak. Slavery in primitive societies was the one way in which the Darwinian thesis of the survival of the fittest was effected.

Though physical bondage may be

eliminated, "slavery," at least as a point of reference never can be. There are certain burdens of life from which man can never free himself. Political institutions may control, direct, and redistribute these burdens, but bondage to the human conditions of life can never be abolished.

Thus it is with life in general. Various forces work to control and direct our ways of life, moving glacier-like and slowly, altering imperceptibly or not at all. All are controlled by the sheer weight of the mass on which the surface rests. It is perhaps unfair to say that life is the best that could be, but it must be said that whatever ways of life we have are the only ones that exist.

It is perhaps easy to see why Sumner's *Folkways* had a great impact on the thinking of early twentieth century America. It is direct, honest, candid, and strengthened by an overwhelming display of facts. But the facts are often used as springboards to hasty and illogical conclusions. Often the conclusions are unwarrantable. Further there is a slyness, an insinuation about Sumner's style of presentation. Often it is the reader who is invited to draw inferences that are only hinted at in the text. Finally, there was an articulation of social and political philosophy that was appealing to many Americans: that which rationalized and justified exploitation of the weak, that resisted the thrusts of social amelioration, that which gave cause for a re-echoing of the poet Alexander Pope that whatever is, is right.

FONTAMARA

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ignazio Silone (1900-)

Time: 1930

Locale: Fontamara, a village in southern Italy

First published: 1933

Principal characters:

BERARDO VIOLA, the leader of the Fontamaran peasants, martyred by Fascists

ELVIRA LA TINTORA, Berardo's sweetheart

THE PROMOTER, the unnamed Fascist governor of the region

PEPPINO GORIANO, the "Hero of Porta Pia," a reporter of national decay

THE UNKNOWN HAND, a revolutionary and the organizer of the peasants

THE NARRATOR, an unnamed peasant,

HIS WIFE, and

HIS SON, refugees from Fontamara

Although *Fontamara* has merit as a first novel, it is best regarded as the background for Ignazio Silone's great novel of 1937, *Bread and Wine*. Silone was able to move from a thesis novel to a novel of character, from a novel resembling a political tract to one encompassing broader human concerns. *Fontamara* reveals Silone's political concerns, and at times the novel seems but a cry; but it affords him neither a philosophical, a social, nor an artistic solution to his problem and the problem of Italy under Fascism. The book ends on the unanswered question of future action possible for the terrorized peasants, but in *Bread and Wine* the answer is to be found in the strength of the humanity and the truth of the heart of the hero and those who come under his influence. In *Fontamara*, Berardo Viola is sacrificed, murdered by the Fascists. Pietro Spina, in *Bread and Wine*, also disappears, ascending to the mountains in an obvious Christlike manner, the message he leaves behind is clear and powerful. Pietro combines Berardo and the Unknown Hand, both the humanity and the revolutionary force, and in doing so he becomes more compellingly human than either character in this earlier work.

The setting for both books is similar. *Fontamara* is a town in southern Italy that up to the point of the story has remained unchanged for centuries. Its poverty and its exploitation have seemed to be eternal and almost the natural condition of its inhabitants. The villagers have accepted poverty as a way of life, their only pleasure and dream being the little land they own or the possibility of escape to America. As the story opens the naturalness of this condition has vanished. The drying up of Lake Fucino has left

the district arid and the course of the small stream that gives water to the peasants' land has been changed. With the disruption of nature, the peasants begin to protest. Silone, in his concern for the natural and physical truths of life that are linked to the soil, has a way of reducing the most complex political and social issues to what is elemental in them. He makes revolution seem the natural solution for these peasants who are plunged from a life of hardship to one of despair. At the beginning of the novel the electricity has been shut off in the village. The search for light in this dark world of Fascism and personal greed leads the peasants along the road of social revolution.

The story of the town and its destruction is told by three narrators, a nameless peasant, his wife, and his son. They represent the Italy of the past, the present, and the future, and they tell the story of *Fontamara* to Silone in Switzerland. Their point of view and the simplicity with which it is revealed are very important to the overall effect of the book. They record but cannot remedy. Often they seem to be straw figures who simply transmit Silone's political polemic. And yet in their narration there is the hint of the strength of being able to survive and overcome that political tyranny and social injustice which Silone explores more fully in *Bread and Wine*. Their narrative is characterized by touches of wry humor and unconscious irony stemming from their lack of sense in a world gone mad. They are among the peasants who are constantly being duped by the townspeople. For example, they are told that the Promoter, that nameless mechanistic bricklayer of the new society, is to have

three-fourths of the stream water and that they are to have three-fourths of what is left. Hearing of this division they think the arrangement gives half the water to each side. Yet they are stoically objective as they talk about themselves in retrospect, and their gullibility does not ridicule them as much as it shows the decay and corruption of those exploiting them.

As they recount their struggle, it soon becomes clear that, for Silone, Fontamara has become a microcosm for the Fascist takeover of all of Italy: first the lack of lights, then the diverting of the stream, then the curfew, the necessity for papers, the forbidding of free speech, and finally, in one chilling scene, the entry of the blackshirts while the men of the village are away and the rape of all the women left behind. All Italy has been raped and the indignation the book would like to arouse in the citizenry is very much like that of the wronged husbands. As a microcosm, the issues are perhaps a little too simply defined. Although one feels uncomfortable about reducing all fascist control to the level of changing the courses of streams and the payment of more chickens to the exploiters, one can still see the movement toward a symbolism that is more religious and more universal in *Bread and Wine*.

In a book where the issues seem more important than their human embodiment, the village of Fontamara appears as the real hero. Because no characters are fully developed, it is what Fontamara stands for that really seems to count. The town is raped, not the women. When the sacristan hangs himself from the bellrope in the church, one does not feel that a man has died as much as one feels that the religious faith of the town has gone. When Peppino Goriano, the "Hero of Porta Pia", the local boy who had gone to Rome and returned a broken man, speaks, he does not chronicle the development of a human being as much as the social and political change in Italy as a whole. He seems no more real than the

"Unknown Hand" who is an idealistic cross between a student and a worker, and yet it is Peppino who is the teller of the human condition. In this novel one sign of the artistic immaturity is the fact that he seems more a witness than a participant.

Although the village seems to be the real hero, there is an attempt to make ■ hero out of Berardo Viola. Ultimately, however, he is more martyr than hero. He plays a role in the revolutionary scheme of things of which he is not very much aware. Berardo is the natural leader of the village, a physical giant who is the epitome of the wise peasant who sees things simply and thus, in Silone's terms, clearly and well. There is some attempt to trace a development in his character as he is led beyond himself to full commitment in the peasants' cause. At the beginning of the novel he is bitter and morose, having sold his land to go to America but because of restrictions unable to leave the country. As a peasant without land he feels he is the lowest man in the village and his marriage with Elvira la Tintora, a dyer, seems an impossibility to him. This personal need for property is something Silone intimates he must overcome. Through most of the book, however, Berardo refuses to accept his position as leader of the peasants because he feels the need for personal survival. With the son of the old man who narrates most of the story, Berardo goes to Rome in quest of money. There he meets all the perversions and corruptions that Peppino Goriano has spoken of. Robbed by men who pretend to help him and unable to find work, he begins to starve. He meets the Unknown Hand, who feeds him and is arrested with him. In jail Berardo undergoes a great transformation. The Unknown Hand makes a revolutionary of him in night-long conversations and Berardo confesses to the police that *he* is the Unknown Hand so that the real one can go free. He has learned that Elvira has died and her death seems to prompt in him the expression of freedom through

responsibility for others that the reader saw operating in him from the beginning of the story. Because he does not die for himself but for another, his new testament is spread all over Italy. With the help of the Unknown Hand the peasants of Fontamara begin a newspaper, indicating that their concern for only what affects them individually has been widened into a communal concern. The book ends with them in a state of awareness but with no solution. This is shown in their search for a name for their paper. They reject titles such as "Truth" or "Justice" and finally settle on "What Must We Do?"

The scene in which the writing of the newspaper takes place is a good one to illustrate why this novel escapes being merely a political tract with a sentimental optimism. What keeps the book from being so is the control achieved by the point of view of the narration and the broad humor that is present even in the most emotional of circumstances. This

scene could easily have become a sentimental eulogy over Berardo. Instead we are told about the problem and debate caused by the peasants' uncertainty about whether Berardo Viola should be spelled with one or two l's. Silone stands outside the debate and exercises some control over his material. Knowing what the peasant is like, he never makes the mistake of seeing him as a depersonalized proletariat, and usually he avoids oversentimentalizing him as well. Although the novel has not achieved fully developed characters, it begins to move from politics to humanity. This concern, which is also the concern of André Malraux in France at this time and whose *Man's Fate* bears very interesting parallels, especially in the jail scenes, with *Fontamara*, is what makes Silone's first novel worth reading. The more mature and artistic statement of this concern are qualities that make Silone's next novel, *Bread and Wine*, one of the great novels of the twentieth century.

A FOOL'S ERRAND

Type of work: Novel

Author: Albion W. Tourgée (1838-1905)

Type of plot: Polemical realism

Time of plot: 1865-1877

Locale: Rockford County in a Southern state

First published: 1879

Principal characters:

COMFORT SERVOSSE (THE "FOOL"), a Yankee ex-soldier

METTA SERVOSSE, his wife

LILY SERVOSSE, their only child

NATHANIEL HYMAN, the county attorney

JERRY HUNT, an old Negro church leader

MELVILLE GURNEY, a former Klan member and the suitor of Lily

Critique:

With stilted dialogue, melodramatic scenes, and chapter-long interruptions for commentary by the author, this novel of Reconstruction days in the South lacks the literary value of craft. But vivid descriptions of Klan violence and a sternly impassioned central character, the "Fool," help to sustain interest. The chief value of the book is its interest as social history:

the viewpoint of a Northern lawyer and Civil War veteran who tries unsuccessfully to make the South his home, befriending the freedmen and alienating the defeated and angry whites. Only gradually does Comfort Servosse come to a full and discouraging understanding of the Southern mind. He pessimistically foresees no reuniting of the nation for

generations. Even to the extent of ■ French name, the protagonist Servosse is Tourgée himself, whose own life paralleled many of the experiences recounted.

The Story:

In 1861, Comfort Servosse went off to the Civil War as a volunteer. This, in retrospect, was his first action as an idealistic "fool." At twenty-seven, he gave up a thriving Michigan law practice and a comfortable home. He considered it his duty to help fight against the wrong of slavery.

When the war ended he was a colonel. He came back home to his wife Metta and daughter Lily. His war exertions had worn him out. Seeking a genial climate and not wanting to rebuild his law practice, he decided to move to the South and begin life afresh. Now that slavery was destroyed, the South was sure to flourish and become the pleasantest part of the country.

He bought the Warrington estate, a place Servosse had admired while stationed nearby. It was dilapidated, and the six hundred acres of land were worn out; but the price was cheap.

Located six miles from Verdenton, a small town, Warrington proved both ■ challenge and reward. The Servosses made extensive repairs. They found the countryside charming. The people seemed congenial. For Thanksgiving dinner they invited six Northern girls who taught at a new colored school. The county judge, Squire Hyman, paid a visit soon thereafter and gave friendly notice that local residents disapproved of the teachers. Colonel Servosse sarcastically replied that his dinner guests were his own affair. The Verdenton newspaper labeled him a fanatical abolitionist.

Undaunted, Servosse established a Sunday school for the Negroes. He also cut up most of his estate into ten- and twenty-acre plots to sell to Negroes, so that they could become self-sufficient property owners. The Servosses hoped the foolish prejudice of the townspeople would pass.

One summer day an outdoor political meeting took place. There was a debate over the right of Negroes to testify in court. Servosse attended only out of curiosity, but the people saw him and forced him to speak. His ideas were not secret, but he had never before intruded them on anyone. Now he publicly told the Southerners to give political rights to literate, property-owning Negroes before the nation lost its patience. It was a bold and unpopular opinion.

Riding home, he encountered old Jerry Hunt, a Negro, who warned him that some angry white men were planning to ambush and whip him because of his speech. Servosse turned the tables on the conspirators, one of whom was injured. He reached home safely.

The next day three Negroes were accused of murdering the injured man, Savage, even though his body had not been found. They were indicted by Judge Hyman and threatened with lynching. But Servosse stood up and said that Savage was alive and at Warrington. The charges were dropped. Soon thereafter Squire Hyman, a bit more open-minded than his neighbors, called on Servosse to talk. He admitted that perhaps the North had not really been vindictive. The war had occurred because neither side had understood the other.

But such talk was useless. Servosse's speech marked him as an abolitionist and agitator. Negroes were beaten. After Servosse received an illiterate threatening letter, he bought arms and ammunition for his family and his Negro tenants and watched the town grow more hostile.

Christmas, 1866, came and went. At a Negro prayer meeting the Servosses observed Jerry Hunt undergoing a mystical experience.

Meanwhile the child Lily was growing and displaying marked intelligence. But it seemed for the young girl that no local friendships, except with Negroes, could ever be established.

Servosse lent support to the local Union League. He saw it as a training school in political responsibility for the

freedmen. To his neighbors it was a league of carpetbaggers and Negroes united against the defeated Southern whites.

A constitutional convention was soon to meet. Servosse was unaware that people considered him the leader of local Unionist sentiment. Attending the meeting of Unionists to nominate delegates, he found himself chosen. He issued a frank statement of his principles, and from that day he was ostracized in the region where he had hoped to make his home. The first point on his statement said: "Equal civil and political rights to all men."

Immediately Servosse received letters from the radical Republicans in the Senate. They demanded speedy reconstruction of the state government under the freed Negroes and the Southern Unionists. Servosse argued that this measure would only keep the nation further divided because the government would be incompetent and the former white leaders would again rebel. But the "Wise Men" of the Senate got their way. Servosse viewed the future with great dismay.

In the winter of 1868-1869 his prediction of unrest was fulfilled. Bob Martin, a Negro, came to Warrington one day and told of a visitation the night before by thirty black-gowned horsemen. They had whipped Martin, abused his wife and daughter, and killed his infant. Local law officers said nothing could be done about the Klan. Letters to the colonel told of Klan atrocities all over the state; local incidents continued.

Now the white residents of the county, attempting to regain political control, held a mass meeting at the courthouse. John Walters, one of the outspoken Unionists of the county, attended the meeting to take notes. He did not return home. The next morning his body was found in a courthouse office. Later a Negro servant told Servosse that the men who had threatened Walters and then killed him were respectable citizens of

the community. News of this crime was all that Uncle Jerry Hunt could take. At a Negro prayer meeting he suddenly stopped the service, told the details of the crime, and named the kidnapers. The following Saturday several hundred Klansmen lynched him on the courthouse lawn. Again, the mob was made up of respectable citizens.

When Servosse wrote a letter asking for federal intervention in the terror-ridden county, his request was denied; the principle of states rights and local government had to be maintained. The reign of terror went on. The Klan was the law, and through it the Old South now triumphed. Meanwhile the North deluded itself, thinking Reconstruction was complete and effective.

As the years passed Lily Servosse grew to womanhood. Melville Gurney, the son of a Confederate general, was torn between Lily and his father's stern principles. One day, while her father was in another part of the county with District Attorney Denton, a warning message came to Lily. The Klan was to intercept Judge Denton on his way home and burn him to death on a railroad trestle. Riding desperately to warn the two men, Lily happened upon a Klan rendezvous at a crossroads. In hurrying away she encountered one of their lookouts and fired a shot at him. It was Melville Gurney.

After warning her father and the judge, she returned home with them. Melville's friend Burleson came along also, and publicly repudiated the Klan, making it easier for Melville to do the same, and thus hopefully to win Lily. For Melville had recognized Lily and had covered for her while she escaped. Burleson's defection was the first of many. The Klan was no longer necessary. The state legislatures issued general pardons for all their heinous crimes.

By 1877 the feeble Reconstruction governments had thus fallen completely into the hands of the old secessionists. It was as Comfort Servosse had predicted. Looking back over the years, he began to

understand, if not approve of, the Southern point of view. He saw the Southern genius for leadership reassert itself. He had had his fill of politics. With his neighbors once again running things to their satisfaction, they became more friendly. Reversal to the old *status quo* of the years before the war had been inevitable.

Melville Gurney, pursuing his courtship, won Colonel Servosse's approval of this. Because Melville's father remained opposed, Lily refused Gurney until his father should approve. Mr. Gurney was on the verge of relenting when Comfort Servosse decided to close up Warrington. Lily would go North to study, and the colonel would attend to other business affairs. Melville Gurney followed her north.

One day Colonel Servosse visited Dr. Martin, the retired president of his college. For the last time he surveyed his

difficult years in the South. The struggle between North and South had only just begun, he told Dr. Martin sadly, and it had been a fool's errand to try to rebuild the South in the image of the North. Just as matters were before the war, the South would soon dominate and control the nation. Her people were united and they were born rulers. Like the Israelites, the Negroes needed a prophet to arise and bring them out of slavery. The nation would have to educate the Negro and the poor white, and the power of states rights would have to be crushed. All would be the work of generations.

Colonel Servosse returned briefly to Warrington after a year, intending a brief stay before taking up a managerial post in Central America. He died at Warrington of yellow fever. Before his death he wrote his own epitaph and called himself a "Fool."

FRANNY AND ZOOEY

Type of work: Novel

Author: J. D. Salinger (1919-)

Time: November, 1955

Locale: Principally New York City

First published: 1961

Principal characters:

FRANNY GLASS, a sensitive college English-major and actress

LANE COUTELL, her pseudo-intellectual boyfriend

ZOOEY GLASS, her brother, an abrasive television actor

BUDDY GLASS, her oldest brother, a writer

BESSIE GLASS, her compassionate mother

Franny and Zooey is J. D. Salinger's third book, coming ten years after his novel of adolescence, *The Catcher in the Rye*, was received with acclaim, and eight years after *Nine Stories* further demonstrated his compassion for the sensitive and disturbed, his fine sense of satiric humor, his penchant for discursive first-person narration, and his growing interest in spiritual salvation in the modern world. The two episodes presented are parts of a larger design still in its developing stage; and the characters named in the title are sister and brother,

members of a family with whom Salinger has dealt for some time, both before and after his notable success and pursuit of privacy combined to make him one of the most celebrated of contemporary American writers.

Franny and Zooey are the children of Les and Bessie Gallagher Glass, former vaudevillians (Jewish and Irish, respectively) and long-time residents of Manhattan. Franny is a college girl and Zooey is a successful television actor of twenty-five; together they are the youngest children of a family that once

numbered five boys and two girls. Like the rest (most of whom were child quiz program performers), they are prodigies. More than that, she is beautiful and he is saved from being dazzlingly handsome only by a slightly protruding ear. Despite these advantages, Zooey has an ulcer, Franny has an incipient nervous breakdown, and both have a sense of profound dissatisfaction with the world, with men, and with themselves. Franny's difficulties, which are the more severe, form the central concern of the book. They are set forth first as we see her arrival for an Ivy League football game and what proves to be a disastrous and abortive weekend. Her date, Lane Coutell, epitomizes the self-centered pseudo-intellectual qualities which have caused her to become hypersensitive to those around her, to withdraw from drama and allied activities, and to seek grace and sustenance in the "Jesus Prayer" (from a devotional book called *The Way of a Pilgrim*) consisting of the phrase, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." But it is ineffectual as she repeats it at the end of the segment bearing her name, while recovering from a fainting spell in the restaurant to which Lane had taken her for lunch.

The Zooey section, set on the following Monday in November of 1955 in the Glasses' New York apartment, begins to reveal the fundamental causes of both breakdown and ulcer. The early education of Franny and Zooey had been supervised by the eldest children: Seymour, a Ph.D. in his teens who had committed suicide in 1948 at the age of thirty-one, and Buddy, a self-alleged neurotic serving as writer-in-residence at a girls' junior college and as narrator of the "Zooey" section. It had been a program designed to inculcate religious and philosophical knowledge before that of the other disciplines conventionally studied by children. The texts were not only the Testaments but also the Upanishads, the Diamond Sutra, the writings of Zen and Mahayana Buddhism, of Laotse and Sri

Ramakrishna, of Eckhart and Kierkegaard. Zooey tells Franny, that their training had turned them into freaks at an early age, with their standards freakish as well—like the Tattooed Lady who wanted everyone else to look like her. Franny's discontent is objectified in her cry that she is sick and tired of ego—always ego—her own and everyone's. As she sees its manifestations in Lane Coutell and her professors, so Zooey sees them in his television associates. Exhorting her, and then telephoning her (on Buddy's telephone in Seymour's old room) with his voice disguised as Buddy's, he tries to show her detachment is the one thing that matters in religious affairs. Finally, as he restores some measure of her self-confidence and emphasizes the need to give love to others, she achieves a kind of peace resembling the *satori* of Zen and drifts into sleep.

The first section of Salinger's book is much the better done of the two. Here he is in control of his material and presents it economically. The second section, however—even granting that it is spoken in the voice of Buddy Glass, brother of the principals, and intimately concerned with their problems—is by contrast prolix and diffuse, at its worst arch and even cute. It demonstrates the consequences of forgetting Henry James's dictum often repeated to himself: dramatize, always dramatize. And when Buddy Glass does render action, it takes the form of conversation—between Zooey and Franny or Zooey and his mother—as in a sixty-eight page passage (surely the longest in modern literature set in a bathroom) between the latter two. Henry James's great contemporary, Joseph Conrad, wrote that the novelist's primary task was above all to make his reader see. As if striving doubly hard for concrete visual effects in what he argues is not a mystical story or even one mystifying in a religious sense, Salinger includes much description, but it is description which often, unhappily, takes the form of a lengthy

catalogue of the contents of the bathroom medicine chest, Bessie Glass's kimono pockets, the furnishings of the living room, or the aphorisms inscribed on the inside of the door of Buddy's room—two pages' worth being quoted in the text. This looseness of form is also seen in the use of a long footnote and two letters (the letter being, like the diary excerpt, a favorite Salinger device), one of which covers twelve pages.

Early in "Zooey," Buddy writes that the work is not so much a story as a homemade movie in prose, and that Bessie, Zooey, and Franny have advised against making it public. One wishes their misgivings had led the author to edit or reshoot some of his "footage." The long letter which Zooey rereads is described by its sender, Buddy, as being

seemingly unending, self-indulgent, opinionated, repetitious, patronizing, even embarrassing. It is also, he adds, surfeited with affection. All of the latter comment—and much of the former—applies to "Zooey."

This novel is the strongest—one might almost say obsessive—embodiment thus far of Salinger's interest in the individual's quest for spiritual advancement. What the work needs, unrealized in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour, An Introduction*, is assimilation of the impact upon his particular sensibility of this subject matter to an extent which will again make possible the subtle control and command that mark his best work in *The Catcher in the Rye* and several of the tales in *Nine Stories*.

FREE FALL

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Golding (1911-)

Time: The 1920's to World War II

Locale: England and a German prison camp

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

SAMMY MOUNTJOY, the narrator, an artist
 BEATRICE IFOR, a young woman whom he seduced
 NICK SHALES, a science teacher
 MISS ROWENA PRINGLE, a Bible teacher
 JOHNNY SPRAGGE and
 PHILIP ARNOLD, Sammy's schoolfellows

V. S. Pritchett has called William Golding the most promising of English novelists. Frank Kermode thinks him the most significant figure in the English novel since the 1920's. Philip Toynbee has announced that he is a writer to be examined with scrupulous interest and respect and one to be criticized only on the highest level. Mr. Golding himself has said that he sees little point at all in writing novels unless he can do something that he did not think he could do or which nobody else has tried before.

Under the circumstances anything that this writer attempts is likely to be viewed with sharper attention than most review-

ers give the average novel. This was the case in English literary circles in the autumn of 1959, when *Free Fall* was published. Few novels of recent years have received a better advance press or have been awaited with keener anticipation. There was considerable disappointment, therefore, and some surprise when the word out of England was that the novel did not live up to the expectations that the previous performances of Golding gave critics and readers every right to expect. The book's reception in this country early in 1960 turned out to be considerably less severe. Generally, American critics praised the writer for his vigor of

imagination and expert technical control in a work of considerable moral implication and symbolic proportion.

The response to Golding's novel on this side of the Atlantic poses an interesting problem: are Americans better conditioned to novels of existential themes, moral ambiguity, prophetic vision, philosophical weight, experimental structures, and a style richly textured by imagery and metaphor? This question is asked not to provoke a controversy but to suggest that Golding stands closer to William Faulkner or Robert Penn Warren or Saul Bellow, say, than to the tradition of the English novel. Like these writers, he is apocalyptic rather than social in his effects, and he exhibits in his fiction a central theme which he has been extending and elaborating from book to book until the whole pattern is beginning to take shape at last. His subject is immense: the Fall and the bitter fruits of lost innocence. Each of his books has been in effect a point of reference where these great coordinates intersect with hairline precision on the graph of man's fate. For this reason *Free Fall* cannot be discussed, as many critics tried to do, apart from Mr. Golding's larger design. The novel is a continuation—almost a culmination—of everything that he had written before.

William Golding had published three novels before *Free Fall* appeared. Of these, the best known is *Lord of the Flies*, a savagely ironic fable which reversed the subject matter and theme of R. M. Ballantyne's nineteenth century success, *The Coral Island*. In Ballantyne's romantic story a group of young English castaways exhibit the most admirable traits of the public school tradition—courage, quickness of imagination, teamwork, pluck, and passionate sympathy. Golding's account is exactly the opposite. His youngsters, survivors of a plane crash while being evacuated during an atomic war, quickly revert to the ruthless law of the jungle. The story is not only an account of the way in which man returns to his primitive state when the restraints of

civilization are removed; it is also an extended metaphor of the Garden and man's fall from his state of innocence and unsought grace. *The Inheritors* is another excursion into the primitive and a period removed in time. This novel deals with the last of "the people," a tribe of Neanderthal men, wiped out by "the others" who have invaded their hunting ground. These "others" are the human clan, already marked as *homo sapiens* by their powers of reason and therefore conscious of their propensity for evil. In these novels sin and guilt are shown as inherent in the nature of man.

The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin—its English title was *Pincher Martin*—is a story of fallen man brought to judgment. Christopher Martin is a naval officer engaged in a grim struggle for survival after his ship has been sunk by a submarine in the North Atlantic. His refuge is a solitary rock in the ocean waste. His struggle is twofold: between extinction and survival on the one hand, salvation and damnation on the other. For in the course of his wretched life Christopher (the Christ-bearer) has become Pincher, the liar, the thief, the impenitent. His experience on the rock shows that in his struggle to survive—metaphorically, to be saved—reason and intelligence are not enough.

These three novels examine the human condition under as many different lights. The isolation of each case by space or by time is deliberate, for in them Golding's chief concern is not the relationship of man to man but man to himself and to the presence of evil as inseparable from the human consciousness and will. *Lord of the Flies* deals with the absence of innocence, *The Inheritors* with man's relationship of guilt to the pre-human past, *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* with his relation to the life to come. In addition, each of these novels relies upon a "gimmick"—the term is Mr. Golding's—for its final effect. At the end of each there is a surprising reversal of the point of view or the introduction of

an unexpected metaphor in the light of which everything that has gone before must be reviewed and reinterpreted. In *Lord of the Flies* the boys are rescued as the result of undergrowth set afire during a murderous manhunt, a situation which a British officer fails to understand in its true light, seeing it only as a childish game. *The Inheritors* ends with a switch from the point of view of "the people" to that of "the others," the guilty destroyers of innocence. In *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* the gimmick is the discovery that the dead man is still wearing his sea boots when his body washes ashore: his struggle for survival has been only a fleeting series of images in a drowning man's mind.

The position of these three points on the graph point inevitably to the fourth, the theme of man's relationship to man developed in *Free Fall*. The opening paragraphs, rich in imagery, set the tone, images intended to reveal the contrast between the rationalistic world of "statistical probability" and the world of sin, remorse, and salvation suggested by the ecclesiastical purple and white, the shepherd's crook, the beam of divine light falling like fire, the pentecostal vision. These meanings may not be clear at the start, for their true significance cannot be interpreted until after the narrator has undergone a transforming experience in a Nazi prison camp and emerges into the light of day once more. But in the light of Mr. Golding's conclusion they give harmony and proportion to the novel as Sammy Mountjoy reviews the course of his life and tries to determine the point at which he fell, the occasion of that decision, freely made, which cost him his freedom.

The story is told in a series of flashbacks, brilliantly presented, in which Sammy Mountjoy, a successful artist, traces his life from its beginning in an anarchic Kentish slum to his moment of revelation. Chronology is distorted but never arbitrarily or with self-indulgence, for the events of Sammy's life are not im-

portant in the order in which they happened but only as their meaning is disclosed. He never knew a father and his mother was a drunken prostitute. A tainted priest rescued him from the sordid surroundings of his childhood after he had desecrated a church altar. His school-day friends were Johnny Spragge and Philip Arnold. (Johnny, he realizes years later, was a young tough protected by his own hard innocence, but Philip was evil because he acted out of reasoned cunning, not healthy instinct.) Like another youthful Samuel, Sammy mistook his vocation, found his spiritual parents in Nick Shales, a science teacher, and a Bible teacher, Miss Rowena Pringle (whom he rejected), studied art, seduced his first love, abandoned her and married another, was a member of the Communist Party for a time, went off to war and in a German prison camp came near betraying a plot to escape. At the end of each episode he asks himself if this is the point at which he lost his freedom, fell from grace. The answer is always a flat no.

He finally realizes that the point of his fall was not in his childhood, for young Sammy Mountjoy had no choice; but by the time he seduced Beatrice he had already given himself to guilt. The knowledge he seeks comes to him in a scene of shocking power after a Gestapo psychologist has threatened him with torture and ordered him locked in a dark cell to soften him up for betrayal. There he undergoes agonies of terror because his imagination transforms a harmless object left on the floor into a dismembered sex organ—symbol of his own carnality—and he finds in his terror his own severance from the world of moral reality and responsibility. Released from the lightless cell, he goes out into the world of men, with the ironic apology of a Nazi official, the statement that the psychologist does not know about people, ringing in his ears.

He is then able to realize that the moment of his fall came when he decided to possess Beatrice Ifor, thus abandoning his

concern for others and using them for his own selfish ends. Dante had found in the image of Beatrice an illuminative vision of the possible in man. Sammy Mountjoy had made his Beatrice the object of his lust. A further revelation comes when Sammy visits the mental institution where Beatrice is a patient and learns that he can never know whether he caused her madness or whether, as the doctor suggests, he may have given her an extra period of sanity before her mind clouded over. All he knows is that the girl is both Beatrice, the spiritual vision he denied, and Miss Ifor, the creature shaped by his selfishness and pride. Given the chance to live by his vision, he had chosen a world of calculation and force. That was his moment of error, not the deed itself but the failure to recog-

nize the relation of man to man—not to be viewed as an irrelevance but as the forge in which change and value are shaped to some good or evil design.

Golding makes no concessions to his readers. *Free Fall* is a powerful fable of the duality of man, impressive in spite of the flaw to which criticism has already pointed. For Sammy Mountjoy is both protagonist and commentator, and in his sin of despair he denies what the novel itself affirms, the gift of mercy and grace to the undeserving. Although not perfectly achieved as a whole, *Free Fall* is nevertheless tremendously moving and meaningful in its parts. A partial failure by William Golding can be more illuminating and instructive than many a writer's best.

FREEDOM OR DEATH

Type of work: Novel

Author: Nikos Kazantzakis (1885-1957)

Time: 1889

Locale: Megalokastro (now Neraklion), Crete

First published: 1956

Principal characters:

CAPTAIN MICHALES, "Captain Wildboar," the principal rebel

CAPTAIN POLYXIGIS, a rival Cretan

NURI BEY, a Turk, Michales' "blood brother"

EMINÉ, a Circassian girl, Nuri Bey's wife

THE PASHA OF MEGALOKASTRO, the leader of the Turks

THE METROPOLITAN OF MEGALOKASTRO, the Greek religious leader

KOSMAS, the son of Michales' brother Kosta

NOËMI (CHRYSLA), Kosmas' wife

SEFAKAS, Michales' father

MANUSAKAS, one of Michales' brothers

TITYROS, another brother

KATERINA, Michales' wife

THRASAKI, Michales' son

RENIO, his daughter

VANGELIO, Tityros' wife

DIAMANDES, Vangelio's brother

Cretans and Turks stride through this book like giants; but the Cretans are the heroes—wild, hard-drinking, desperately loving, freedom-dedicated men, fighting to the death against their Turkish oppressors.

Above all the characters in the book

towers the figure of Captain Michales; he bows to no one and has regard for no one once he becomes convinced that he must die for Crete. His daughter is a stranger to him; his wife cannot call him back from the mountains where he fights his last battle; the Metropolitan cannot move

him, and God Himself—if He is not for Crete—is no god to Michales. There is only one moment in his history when Michales is diverted from his dedication to Crete. While defending a monastery against the Turkish invaders, he hears that a woman who has fatally fascinated him, Eminé, has been captured by the Turks. With a small band of fighters he leaves the monastery and rescues her; but knowing how her charm might keep him from his military duties, he refuses to look at her. Nevertheless, he has erred, and he pays for his deed.

When Michales makes a last stand with seven other inspired Cretan rebels against a horde of Turks after all the other Cretans have accepted the order to lay down their arms, his action is understandable after the reader has seen proof of Michales' fantastic devotion to freedom and to death. For years the Cretan motto has been "Freedom or Death!" Even the city bells bear these names; and the old grandfather, Sefakas, injures himself mortally while painting these words on the walls in Megalokastro. But on the last day of his life, as he waits for the attack that he knows will mean death to himself and his companions, Michales—believing that revolt and death are always worth while, even though not sufficient in the present case for victory—shouts his patriotic slogan. As he charges the enemy, holding aloft the severed head of his nephew Kosmas, he roars out the first two words of his war cry. Death itself, as his brain is exploded by a bullet, ends the sentence.

Another Greek, Aristotle, long ago defined the tragic hero as one who, better than most, nevertheless meets an inevitable end because of the fatal consequences of some moral flaw. The power of tragedy derives from the relentless building of the drama toward that last moment of defeat; the audience pities the hero and shares the fear of being mortal and therefore liable to error and to death. In following the course of Michales' last months, this peculiar Greek power of

tragedy makes itself known in comparatively modern terms. Perhaps one can say that Michales' tragic flaw is his devotion to Eminé, Nuri Bey's wife. But there is greater evidence to show that if Michales has a flaw, it is the flaw of extreme and irrational nationalistic fervor—in all probability a flaw common to many outstanding men of the times. The grandfather, Sefakas, approaching death, questions several Greek fighters about the purpose of their existence. Captain Mandakas, the first man questioned, shows a glass jar in which he preserves the ears of Turks he has killed. Old Sefakas asks whether that was what he was born for—to kill. Mandakas has to scratch his head and think before he can reply that he was fighting for freedom.

In defense of these men for whom rebellion against the Turks seems to be the primary business of life, the novel says, in effect, that for Cretans at the time resistance was the only honorable course; in fact, the history of these families is the history of heroic rebels. References are made in the story to uprisings in 1854, 1866, and 1878; the revolt with which the story is concerned occurs in 1889. Between these periods of major revolt were sporadic incidents, murder, and retaliation for murder, events which strengthened the hatred on both sides.

Captain Michales' principle failing at the outset of this novel is his need for periodic drinking bouts, during which time the resentment in him would usually result in some violent act which would antagonize the Turks. Among the Turks only Nuri Bey wins any sympathy from Michales, and that is the result of a sentimental childhood attraction and a mutual regard for manliness. As a sign of their respect for each other as fighters, Michales and Nuri have cut their arms, mixed their blood, and drunk it to become blood brothers. Nevertheless, Nuri is uneasy in Michales' company, and to win his friend's enthusiasm he persuades his wife Eminé to sing for them. When Nuri's wife sings, Michales is enraptured.

Another Cretan fighter, Captain Polyxigis, meeting Eminé accidentally, is also irresistibly drawn by her animal sensuality, and Eminé, as lustful for men as Polyxigis is for her, finally bids him become her lover.

From this point on, Michales and Polyxigis are comrades in arms, but private rivals. Nuri Bey, having lost his wife's respect in a test of strength with Michales, is further and irretrievably handicapped in the competition for Eminé's favors when a knife blow from Manusakas, whom Nuri has mortally wounded, deprives him of his manhood. The murder of his brother, Manusakas, so maddens Michales that he waits his chance to revenge that death by killing Nuri; but when he finally confronts the Turk, he refuses to kill anyone so weakened. Nuri, wishing death in combat, has to be satisfied with suicide. Polyxigis is therefore free to take Eminé as his wife, and he tries to Christianize her.

Friction between the Cretans and the Turks comes closer to mass conflict when Thodoros, Manusakas' son, murders Nuri Bey's nephew and escapes to the mountains to fight from there. Michales organizes the Cretans as the Turks make sweeping forays through the Christian quarters of the city, smashing into houses and killing the occupants. It is during one of the battles that follow, while in defense of the monastery Christ the Lord, that Michales leaves his post to rescue Eminé. He blames himself for the subsequent loss of the monastery, and his desire to fight to the death has something of self-punishment behind it. Neverthe-

less, there is a majestic sweep to the novel as Michales, alone of all the Cretan captains, fights the Turks in the mountains and waits for death.

The novel achieves additional weight by working into the story of Michales' revolt the related stories of Tityros, his brother, and Kosmas, his nephew. Tityros, a physically weak schoolmaster, poisons his wife's brother in order to win dominance in his house. His wife, Vangelio, who loves her brother but not her husband, commits suicide. These two deaths liberate Tityros so that he becomes an aggressive Cretan, physically strong, and a teacher of rebellion. Kosmas, who has studied abroad, returns to Crete with a Jewess as his wife. In the most sensitive scenes of this sometimes brutal book, Kazantzakis shows the wary and alien reception given this woman, Noëmi, by Kosmas' mother and sister. Noëmi's miscarriage, while Kosmas is away fighting, is said to be the result of a visitation by the ghost of Kosmas' father.

After the death of Sefakas, Kosmas is sent to the mountains to make a last appeal to Michales to give up the futile fight against the Turks. But the sight of Michales' death-inviting battle with the Turks so inspires the youth that despite wife, mother, and those who have urged him to discourage Michales, he joins in the fighting. He is beheaded just before Michales receives a bullet through his brain.

As a representation of a violent period in Cretan history, and as a tragic and epic drama of a Cretan fighter, *Freedom or Death* is an unusually effective novel.

THE FRONTIER IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Type of work: History

Author: Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932)

First published: 1920

July 12, 1893, is the best known date in American historiography, as distinct from the best known date in American history, July 4, 1776. Yet both saw Declarations

of Independence. The scene in 1893 was the annual meeting of the fledgling American Historical Association, held in Chicago to coincide with the Columbia

Exposition. The exposition celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus; it horribly depressed an Easterner, Henry Adams, but it so excited a Wisconsin native, Hamlin Garland, that he resolved to return from New York and settle in the booming Middle Western city. Another man from Wisconsin got up to deliver a paper before the American Historical Association, and by proposing "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" he read American historians their Declaration of Independence and permanently altered the study of American history in schools and colleges.

Frederick Jackson Turner was the speaker; his paper was often reprinted, but it was not until 1920 that he put together the first full statement of his theory on the frontier by republishing his original paper with twelve supporting articles in *The Frontier in American History*; the second and consequent part of his theory, *The Significance of Sections in American History*, was published in the year he died. His 1893 paper was preceded by his doctoral dissertation on the fur trade in Wisconsin and two articles on history and American history which show the development of his theory of the frontier. Two events precipitated his paper: first, the work of the Italian economist, Achille Loria, with its twin suggestions of free land as the key to changes in human society, and of America as the best colony in which to test this thesis, came to Turner's notice in the late 1880's and influenced his 1892 paper on "Problems in American History"; second, the superintendent of the 1890 census had recently announced that insufficient free land existed in the United States for the frontier to feature in the census reports as it had done since the first census in 1790. Turner dramatized his paper by opening with this statement; in effect he was directing his co-workers away from political and diplomatic history, insisting that, no matter what happened in European capitals, American history was made in the

hinterland where the westward movement had been the most important historical phenomenon for Americans, and thus opening up the vast frontier of local history to historians in whatever state they might be located. The dramatic setting and occasion for Turner's paper was not at once appreciated, but it played its part in spreading his ideas rapidly.

The initial paper on "The Significance of the Frontier" was constructed in two parts, with an introduction. The first paragraph asserts that American history is the gradual settlement of the West, and this is followed by four paragraphs defining the frontier as a moving belt between settled and free land; it moved because of the force behind it, and because of the environment into which it moved its chief characteristic is a process of reversion to savagery followed by a slow recovery of civilization which, because its chief influences have been indigenous, cannot be an imitation of European life and must therefore be American. If the frontier is the maker of Americans, and they are the makers of their history, then the frontier holds the key to that history.

The first part of the paper presents in rapid survey the different kinds of frontier in American history and the modes of advance from the time when it began as the frontier of Europe on the Atlantic seaboard in the early seventeenth century to its near completion in the 1880's. The changes are determined by the different geographical boundaries or barriers to the westward advance—Indians, farm land, salt supplies, and the like. Here Turner draws several vivid sketches of the succession of different types of settlers who followed one another in any one settlement or who could be imaginatively plotted as a series of different kinds of frontier belts such as hunting, trading, nomadic, grazing, farming, financing. These stretched back eastward from the most advanced settlement at any given point in American history.

The second part of the paper is a provocative summary of changes enforced

by the frontier experience on the regions to the east and in Europe, from whence the frontier impulse came. First, Turner proposes that the frontier is the real melting-pot of immigrant nationalities and without it the United States would in 1890 resemble those nations of Europe. The next point is the success of the frontier. Although its rate of advance changed, it never faltered, and its increasing distance westward made Americans less dependent on England. Third, the power of the federal government stems from that granted Congress by the Constitution to dispose of the public domain and thus exert Federal sway inside the state; without the frontier the Federal government would have had little to legislate and less money. Fourth, the products of the frontier first determined the development of the national economy, maintaining a rural dominance over increasing industrialization in the East. Fifth, the egalitarianism of the frontier kept the States democratic. Last, in struggles with the economic, religious, and educational power of the East, the West came to have a character of its own, which determined that the distinction of the states would always be a duality of national and sectional interests.

Although the reputation of this paper credits it with causing a revolution in American historiography, it would be truer to say that it was so completely in accord with the predilections of American historians in later decades that it both anticipated and supported the predominant social or economic interpretation of American history which came to be preferred to the dynastic, the succession of Presidents. It helped to make possible a wholly economic explanation of the causes of the Civil War, for instance, and it had the effect of determining Turner's life work. *The Frontier in American History* coped with his first task: to establish the historical outlines of his moving frontier and then to consider the unique character of post-frontier society, the residuum he called "The West." Turner's

was first of all a new problem in historiography: how to explain that an uninhabited area could affect an inhabited area, a problem unknown in European historiography. He used the term "frontier" as the crossover point between the two areas and since it was always moving westward, however irregularly, he conceived it imaginatively as altering the physical shape of the inhabited area behind it by leaving successive belts of post-frontier societies, each of which was a "West" and together formed "the West."

Before analyzing his "West" he outlined the westward or moving frontier from Massachusetts to the "Old West" to the "Middle West," where he expanded his outline to closer study of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. "The Significance of the Mississippi Valley in American History" both completes the moving of the frontier as far as Turner took it and allows him to introduce "The Problem of the West," "Dominant Forces in Western Life," "Contributions of the West to American Democracy," "The West and American Ideals," "Middle Western Democracy"; this discussion leads him to the large claim that the West is democratic and that "democracy" is another name for "West." Thus the whole meaning of American history is summed up in "the West." At this point Turner becomes not a narrative historian but a social historian determined to explore "forces," "ideals," and "significances."

In his social history Turner tends to conclude his work with perorations about the virtue of American democracy and that of the West in producing it, thus showing himself a loyal son of the Middle Border. "The Significance of the Mississippi Valley in American History" concludes that the valley realized the American ideal of democracy and constitutes the heartland of America almost an independent nation which has shed its light on the surrounding feebleness of the South, the East, and the Far West. Turner developed these ideas during his

long tenure at Harvard and modified them when he took up residence at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California; in turn, they led him to his pioneer work on sections in American history and life. His methods are summarized in his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1910, "Social Forces in American History," the twelfth chapter of *The Frontier in American History* in which he reads statistics of American growth since 1890 as evidence of the force behind the frontier turning to new fields in the development of industrial and federal power. Turner summons his fellow historians to continue the work he began nearly two

decades before by using statistics available from other disciplines, as he did in using the census bulletin in 1893. His embracing view forecasts the development of American studies, and the discipline he hinted at is given meaning by his insistence that the duty of the historian is to engage himself in the life of his nation by continually reinterpreting the immediate past in terms of the present, as he himself had done in Chicago in 1893.

Turner's concluding chapter "Middle Western Pioneer Democracy," presents his belief that pioneer life gave Americans a chance for a true democracy, personal freedom, and a free society for the individual.

GABRIELA, CLOVE AND CINNAMON

Type of work: Novel

Author: Jorge Amado (1912-)

Time: 1925-1926

Locale: Ilhéus, Bahia, Brazil

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

GABRIELA, a beautiful young mulatto
 NACIB SAAD, the Syrian-born proprietor of the Vesuvius Bar
 MUNDINHO FALCÃO, a young cacao exporter and rising political reformer
 COLONEL RAMIRO BASTOS, the rugged old political boss of Ilhéus
 COLONEL MANUEL OF THE JAGUARS, a planter from the outlands
 COLONEL JESUÍNO MENDONÇA, a cuckold
 COLONEL AMÂNCIO LEAL, a former bandit chief
 COLONEL MELK TAVARES
 MALVINA TAVARES, his young daughter
 PROFESSOR JOSUÉ, a young teacher
 TONICO BASTOS, the most elegant man in Ilhéus, a lady-killer
 COLONEL CARIOLANO RIBEIRO, a wealthy plantation owner
 GLORIA, his mistress
 FATHER BASÍLIO CERGUEIRA, a worldly priest
 JOAO FULGÊNCIO, a good-natured skeptic
 QUINQUANA and
 FLORZINHA DOS REIS, spinster sisters of an old Ilhéan family
 DONA ARMINDA, Nacib Saad's neighbor, a widow

According to Gilberto Freyre, the internationally respected Brazilian historian and social philosopher, Jorge Amado is perhaps the only Brazilian writer of any importance allied with the Communist Party. Winner of a Stalin Prize and a former resident of Communist Czecho-

slovakia, this great novelist has served as a Communist representative in the Brazilian government. Reputedly disenchanted by the events of 1956, however, Jorge Amado has never been a mere "red intellectual"; and in *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, his peculiarly robust, humane,

pure kind of "Marxist" thought lies deeply buried in an even more humane, more robust, purer art.

The setting of the novel, for example, is perfectly suited to a retelling of that myth by which Karl Marx organized his vision of history. In the middle 1920's of this century the Brazilian provinces were still suffering under the political, social, and economic dominance of the *coroneis*. These "colonels," who ran unchallenged the local organization of both major political parties, who dictated at whim all manners and morals and who possessed and held, often by violence, the huge estates that supplied the money upon which all provincial life depended, were the direct administrators of what can only be recognized as a feudal society. Like the planters and cattle barons of North America, they ruled vast territories through a complicated system of allegiances built upon favors, kinship, and the naked use of power. In the country around Ilhéus, a seacoast town in the province of Bahia, the grip of the colonels, given sinews by a boom in the international market for cacao, had remained anachronistically strong. What Amado's novel is basically concerned with, then, is the breaking of that grip and the change from a feudal order, as represented by these colonels, to a new bourgeois order, as represented by Mundinho Falcão, a rich, energetic, progress-minded young man from Rio.

Unlike most of the colonels, who are self-made men, Falcão is the son of an illustrious family whose influence extends easily upward into the highest reaches of the national government. He has exiled himself from the high life of Rio de Janeiro for three reasons: to make his own fortune, to forget a girl, and to accomplish needed social reforms. As the book opens, however, one of the colonels has just murdered his wife and her lover; and if the fact that she had a lover at all reveals some cracks in the old order, the further implication that the colonel will get off scot-free under the unwritten law

indicates that, for the time being at least, it still survives as an effective force.

Meanwhile, Nacib Saad, a fat, gentle Brazilian from Syria and the owner of the Vesuvius Bar, has just lost his cook, whose appetizers and tidbits had largely accounted for his considerable success. Fortunately for him however, a continuing drought in the backlands has brought a steady stream of homeless migrants to Ilhéus looking for work; and just as Nacib is becoming desperate, he discovers among them Gabriela, whose scent of cloves and cinnamon-colored skin enhance equal talents for cooking food and making love. As a girl of the people, Gabriela represents a way of life that is both older and more essentially Brazilian than any of the ways represented by either the colonels or Mundinho Falcão. She embodies the idea of *convivência*—of varied and mingling races and classes mutually dissolving and living together in harmony and absolute democracy—that is at once a Brazilian tradition and a Brazilian ideal.

While Mundinho Falcão deliberately operates upon the body of society, re-channeling its old systems into new ones, Gabriela unconsciously operates upon its soul. Every man in town adores her and few of the women, surprisingly enough, are jealous. When election time arrives, the colonels find their influence whittled away to the vanishing point; and in a last attempt to save their ascendancy, the more reactionary of them attempt to arrange the assassination of a powerful political chief who has defected to Falcão. The killing fails, of course, and Falcão's forces of reform are swept into office, not without his privately acknowledging, however, that even this reform is only temporary and must lead to changes even greater. The nature of the changes still to come, one sees, resides in the musky clove and dusky cinnamon of the beautiful mulatto.

Nacib Saad's attempt to transform Gabriela into a married, respectably shod, and housebroken little *bourgeoise* merely ends in the discovery that her love is as

naturally democratic as her ancestry: she has slept with any man in Ilhéus lucky enough to be handsome. As her husband, of course, poor Nacib is shocked, but not for long. Gabriela still loves him and he learns, too, in the course of a short estrangement disastrous for the business of the Vesuvius Bar, that he likewise still loves her. Wild and free, this mulatto girl is as unregimentable as she is desirable, as indomitable as she is beautiful. At the novel's end she finds herself, though no longer his unhappy wife, once again established as Nacib's happy cook and mistress. All other factions, too, the colonels' and Falcão's, are reunited in freedom to celebrate new prosperity and progress for Ilhéus, and the colonel who had shot his wife is sent, as testimony to a new reign of law, to prison.

Here is Amado's version of Marxist myth. It is Marx, however, with a con-

siderable difference. Brazil, the writer seems to have recognized, is not a nineteenth century Germany or England; neither is it a twentieth century Russia or Czechoslovakia. If Brazil needs a revolution, says Amado—and even conservatives like Gilberto Freyre agree that it does—let it be not a puritanical affair, with brigades of workers shouldering picks and marching under banners, but rather a revolution à la Rabelais, with freedom and harmony as its goals, and *Fay ce que voudras* as its motto. What Amado wants, in the end, is social changes that will confer upon everyone the freedom of a Gabriela; and it is his passionate desire for this freedom that makes *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* so superior to the blind exigencies of any party line. In fable and atmosphere the novel is a work of robust humanity, sensuous purity, and ultimate universality.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOANALYSIS

Type of work: Psychological treatise
Author: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
First published: 1920

A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, which could more properly be entitled *Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis*, remains, probably, the most widely used and popular means of introducing Freud's ideas of the psyche. Given during World War I, these lectures embody the results of Freud's analytical research between 1895 and 1910, when the basic groundwork was set forth for his revolutionary ideas about the role of the unconscious and the power of sexuality in the life of the mind. Several other introductory surveys were done by Freud in later years, but these lectures of 1920 remain the most concise and useful of the Freudian surveys. And though a veritable army of Freudians have explicated the Viennese pioneer, none replaces the mentor himself, for not only is he the natural choice as a guide, but also he is an excellent stylist, the power of

whose mind speaks in every paragraph, even in translation. Freud reproduces his own quest for meaning in these lectures, involving the reader in what is, among other things, one of the greatest detective stories ever written. Another device, skillfully employed here as elsewhere in Freud's work, is to proceed by frequent recourse to dialogue between Freud and an imaginery, quasi-hostile critic. Through this rhetorical procedure, the reader is half convinced even before he fully experiences the reasoning Freud uses to persuade his imaginary antagonist.

The first four of these lectures present Freud's analysis of the psychology of errors as a simple means of introducing what was at that time an extraordinary subject. The slip of the tongue or pen, misreading, forgetting, or mislaying things often is not due to chance, but comes

from something contrary to our rational intention, slipping out and distorting speech or action. From the device of the errors that often are not what they appear, Freud turns for the next ten lectures to dreams. Like the errors of pen and speech, this is a subject that we have all experienced. (Freud is concerned to stress that his subject is not abnormal psychology, for we are all subject to this analysis.) Patients spoke of dreams so often Freud began to delve into this area of investigation. This was another radical idea, for the reading of dreams was tantamount to gipsy soothsaying. The dream must be interpreted, for the manifest dream content always condenses, displaces, or elaborates the latent content, and replaces feelings with visual images. In interpretation, the analyst ignores surface confusion and waits for the central theme to emerge from the dreamer's retelling. In our sleep we regress; the conscious mind idles at its customary control; we return to something like the womb. The dreamer knows the meaning of the dream, but generally he does not know that he knows. (Freud maintains that all the manifest or surface content of the dream comes from experience of the previous waking day.) We must interpret because the dreamer fears the censor or dreads reality, making him distort and condense. So all dream material is symbolic. If we know the dreamer and his environment thoroughly, interpretation is simple. But it is unclear to Freud at this time why certain elements are symbolic and others are not. It is clear, however, that the overwhelming number of dream symbols are sexual. (As Freud notes in his introduction, the greatest resistance to his work came because of his insistence upon the importance of sexuality in the formation of character. It is certainly true that in late nineteenth century Europe and America, when Freud worked, he could hardly exaggerate the harm done to the psyche by the repressive conventions of that time.) In dreams we find the male organ represented by all

pointed or elongated objects, fish and snakes, anything sharp, or a weapon. All hollows, apertures, and jewels represent the female organ. Birth is associated with water, and erection and intercourse with flying. Freud notes that we can find all these associations in folklore, legend, and jokes, and in our daytime fantasies as well as in our night dreams. So important is this material, he briefly suggests, that all our conscious language, and thus rational thought, comes from the libido, or sexual hunger. Answering critics (as he always does), Freud says we must not apply these symbolic readings mechanically; dreams require a sensitive and intelligent interpreter. And all dreams are not primarily sexual, though he insists that the oddest, most anxiety-ridden ones invariably are. The material in dreams is primitive in that it comes out of the childhood of the dreamer, and perhaps the childhood of the race. (Here Freud briefly suggests an idea that his quondam colleague, Carl G. Jung was to make into a major tenet in his quite different analytical mode. Jung posited a racial unconsciousness within the psyche, as well as an individual one.)

It is an untenable fallacy, Freud observes, to call children innocent, if we mean innocent of sexuality. The child has not yet focused upon sex as reproduction, a situation that adults often fail to observe. The child is "polymorphously perverse," in Freud's phrase. In dreams we regress to childhood, for the unconscious is the repository of infantile mental life. What adults call evil in dream and intent is merely childlike. One observes here the calm expectation by Freud that all can be understood and so controlled by man, physician, and patient. Ironically known to popular culture as an exponent of free love and a demonic prophet of uncontrollable sex, Freud actually was one of the greatest of the nineteenth century rationalists. His whole life went into extending understanding, so that control and utilization might follow. Rather than a prophet of doom, he is a scientist with

perhaps too much faith in man's perfectibility.

The last portion of the book, a series of twelve lectures, Freud devotes to outlining his general theory of sexuality and neurosis. The whole science of psychoanalysis came from the study of obsessional neurosis. In such a condition, the mind is taken over at times by seemingly useless and meaningless compulsions, and forced to repeat trivial acts that nevertheless are endowed with unreasonable tension and anxiety. Through his work with Josef Breuer on hysteria—first through hypnosis and then through his own technique of free association—Freud found that patient after patient, in probing the past, would come up with some event or situation over which the unconscious still broods, causing neurosis in the present. Freud called this stumbling block a *trauma*, and he designed his analytical technique as a way of exploring and explaining this event to the patient, thus ridding him of the need to be its victim. Because of fear the patient will always resist such a probe, a situation that must be overcome by the analyst's seeking the patient's confidence and getting him to participate in the quest himself. Every neurosis contains such a trauma or fixation, Freud avers, though not every fixation need cause a neurosis. The mind could be described as two rooms: a large one crowded with unconscious feelings and memories, and a small pre-conscious room of control and censorship. (In later Freudian theory this metaphorical structure will become the famous tripartite designation of Id, Ego, and Superego.)

In the last lectures of this series, Freud describes the development of human sexuality as his analysis found it. Libido, or sex drive, is present in the child from the beginning, though unfocused. At first libido is directed through sucking towards its mother's breast, which is the first object of sexual desire. Later the child is auto-erotic, finding gratification for libido in exploring itself. Then the child becomes analistic, interested in objects, finding gratification in bowel movements, for example. From age seven on the child is latently mature, beginning to be concerned with adult or genital sex. The first object of love is the mother. Here Freud summarizes his famous analysis of the Oedipus myth, in which the hero is punished by society and the gods for killing his father and marrying his mother. This is the key myth in Western culture, Freud explains, because what our society calls "maturity" consists of displacing the libidinal fixation from the mother and transferring it to another being of the opposite sex beyond the incest barrier. When we cannot or will not do this, we revert to childlike sexuality, which in the adult is perversion.

In conclusion, Freud notes that psychoanalysis is only a superstructure, resting on some organic base (the electrochemistry of the brain) about which we know little as yet. Psychoanalysis does not advocate "free love" or wild abandonment through destroying censorship. It seeks to free the libido from unhealthy repressions and re-educate the whole person for a responsible life in a world of adult maturity.

GEORGICS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Publius Vergilius Maro (70 B.C.-19 B.C.)

First transcribed: c. 37-29 B.C.

Vergil's *Georgics*, a long poetic work in four sections, was written at the request of the poet's patron, Maecenas, to bolster the Emperor Augustus' agricultural policy.

It was essential to the progress of the nation that farming be seen as a worthy and patriotic occupation for soldiers returning from military campaigns, and Vergil's

work glorifies many aspects of country life. His poem is one of the most remarkable in the history of Western literature, for in it he has managed to provide a considerable amount of what was, in his day, accurate information on the cultivation of crops and the care of animals and at the same time to maintain a lofty tone that is far from the prosaic quality of the subject matter.

The poet uses mythology extremely effectively, invoking the gods traditionally associated with agriculture at the beginning of each section and describing such ordinary phenomena as spring rains in metaphorical terms; the rain is Aether, the atmosphere's embrace of his wife, the earth. By referring to familiar deities Vergil lifts details of weather and conditions of the soil far above the realm of the Farmer's Almanac. His metaphorical language, his use of epic similes, and his references to the greatness of his country also contribute to making the *Georgics* fine poetry.

Each of the four sections deals with a specific problem of farming, but each also has a number of digressions that add interest and grandeur to the work as a whole. The first *Georgic* begins with a long invocation to the deities who control the growth of grain, vines, and olives, and with a special prayer to Julius Caesar, who has become a new divinity, with his own place among the constellations. The body of the book is devoted to the plowing, planting, and harvesting of crops and to the helpful knowledge that can be gained by study of the stars. Practical advice on the best time to plow and sow, on crop rotation, fertilizing the soil, and the tools needed by the farmer is enlivened by a majestic description of a storm, brief vignettes of farm life, and a description of the worship of the goddess Ceres at harvest time. A discussion of the changing appearance of the sun under different weather conditions leads to a description of the eclipse which was one of the disastrous omens that appeared at the time of the assassination of Julius

Caesar. The conclusion of this section is a prayer that Augustus, Rome's new champion, may bring peace to the nation and allow farmers to return from the battlefield to their own lands.

The cultivation of the vine and the olive, staples of the Italian economy, is the central theme of the second *Georgic*, and Vergil makes the appropriate invocation to Bacchus, the wine god, as well as to his patron, as this part of the poem opens. Perhaps the most memorable passages here are the poet's lines in praise of Italy, in which he cites the special virtues of each part of the country and evokes patriotic sentiments as he alludes to famous ruling families of past ages. Fine, too, is the restatement of the pastoral ideal, Vergil's picture of the happy state of the farmers who live at peace on their own lands, far from the battlefield, the rule of law courts, and the frenzy of politics.

Even subjects like the grafting of trees and the preparation of soil for the planting of seedlings are treated in majestic language, and the catalogue of the virtues of the various wines of the country is equally poetic. Milton learned much from his classical master about the evocative effect of place names.

Vergil's praise of country life at the end of this section is tied to his political aims; he asserts that it was through the efforts of the sturdy farmers of the past that Etruria and Rome won their first greatness, and he suggests that much of the fate of the new empire will rest on those who cultivate the Italian fields.

The third *Georgic* opens with a general statement on poetry. Vergil realizes that he is opening new doors in writing about fields and flocks, yet he knows, too, that all the old myths have been repeated so often that they no longer lend lustre to the poet. He hopes eventually to win fame for himself and for his homeland, Mantua, by describing the heroic exploits of Augustus Caesar and his army, but meanwhile he must follow Maecenas' request that he chronicle the domain of

the wood nymphs, and he turns to a new topic, the breeding of horses and cattle. He pictures vividly the strength and grace of the thoroughbred horse, alert and eager for action as the mount of a great soldier. Again Vergil elevates the tone of his subject by alluding to the magnificent horsemen and charioteers among the Homeric heroes.

The nurture of sheep and goats forms another part of this section. The poet even suggests remedies for diseases that strike these animals, and he gives a moving and realistic description of a devastating plague among them, picturing their death agonies as the result of the avenging force of the fury Tisiphone, who drives slaughter and terror before her.

The fourth Georgic has probably provided the greatest pleasure for modern readers, who can share Vergil's fascination with the habits of bees more readily than his interest in various kinds of soil and methods of grafting. The poet relates the popular belief that the highly complex society of the bees results from a special blessing bestowed on them by Jupiter after they aided him when he was imprisoned in a cave; they alone of all the creatures live under law.

The poet has observed colonies of bees closely, and he describes with great accuracy their characteristic swarms and the battles between the "king" bees for supremacy. He suggests the best sweet-smelling plants for attracting the swarms to new hives and recommends the playing of cymbals to aid in drawing them toward their new homes. He also offers helpful hints about the flowers that make the best honey and mourns regretfully that he lacks time and space to speak of gardens.

The last half of this Georgic deals with the curious subject of spontaneous generation from corruption, a belief that has fascinated men as recently as the seventeenth century, when Sir Francis Bacon discussed it in his *New Atlantis*. There was a tradition, apparently quite widespread, that, should a whole colony of bees perish, a new swarm could be born from the corruption of the blood of a slaughtered bullock. Vergil explains this phenomenon by relating a mythological tale about a shepherd, Aristaeus, the son of Apollo and a sea nymph, who goes to the sea god Proteus to learn why his bees have died. He finds that the nymphs who mourn the deaths of Orpheus and Eurydice have brought about this misfortune, and he sacrifices four bulls to placate the spirits of the singer and his bride. From the carcasses of these animals arise a great cloud of bees, signifying the acceptability of the sacrifice, and from that time on hives were believed to be replenished in the same way.

The concluding lines of the fourth Georgic summarize the poet's achievement in this poem; he speaks a little apologetically about singing of the cultivation of fields, flocks, and trees while Caesar is winning great victories, and he identifies himself as the same writer who formerly sang of the shepherd Tityrus, in his *Eclogues*.

While the *Aeneid* is unquestionably Vergil's masterpiece, the *Georgics* perhaps reveals his remarkable poetic imagination even more fully. The successful didactic poems in Western literature are very few in number, and not many of them achieve the majestic tone of Vergil's work.

GO DOWN, MOSES

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: The 1830's to about 1940

Locale: The Mississippi Delta

First published: 1942

Principal characters:

LUCIUS QUINTUS CAROTHERS McCASLIN (CAROTHERS), founder of the McCaslin clan
THEOPHILUS McCASLIN (UNCLE BUCK) and
AMODEUS McCASLIN (UNCLE BUDDY), his twin sons
SOPHONSIBA BEAUCHAMP (SIBBEY), Uncle Buck's wife
ISAAC McCASLIN (IKE), the son of Buck and Sibbey
CAROTHERS McCASLIN EDMONDS (CASS), the grandson of Carother's daughter and an Edmonds
ZACHARY EDMONDS, Cass's son
CAROTHERS McCASLIN EDMONDS (ROTH), Cass's grandson
EUNICE, the slave and mistress of Carothers McCaslin, who drowned herself
TOMASINA (TOMEY), the daughter of Carothers and Eunice
TERREL (TURL, or TOMEY's TURL), the grandson of Carothers and Eunice and the son of Carothers and Tomey
TENNIE BEAUCHAMP, the slave of Sophonsiba and her brother Hubert Beauchamp
LUCAS BEAUCHAMP, one of the three surviving children of Turl and Tennie
MOLLIE, Lucas' wife
THE GIRL OF "Go Down, Moses," the granddaughter of Lucas' brother James
SAMUEL BEAUCHAMP, grandson of Lucas and Mollie
IKKEMOTUBBE, Indian chief who sold the land to Carothers McCaslin
SAM FATHERS, Ikkemotubbe's illegitimate son and the last survivor of the Indian tribe

Though usually discussed as a novel, *Go Down, Moses* is both a collection of seven short stories, written and published independently, which together form a sharply detailed picture of a small region in the Mississippi Delta, and an outrageously confusing tale of the McCaslin clan. The book recapitulates the story of the American South and reaffirms the Biblical views of human history.

"Was," which foreshadows the cruelty and injustice of later generations, and shows man treating his brother like a piece of property and gambling over human happiness, is one of the funniest stories Faulkner wrote. It opens with a pack of hounds racing through the house after a fox. A central pun of the book, "race" is the theme of the first story, which takes the form of outrageous rural comedy. Buck and Buddy, twin sons of Carothers McCaslin, chase their slave and half brother, Tomey's Turl; Turl is after his sweetheart, Tennie, a slave of Hubert and his sister Sophonsiba Beauchamp; and Sophonsiba, called Sibbey, the only

woman in the whole countryside, is after Buck. Buck and Buddy must catch Turl before he catches Tennie or else Sibbey will bring Turl home, stay for a visit, and may catch Buck. When Buck arrives at Warwick, the dilapidated Beauchamp plantation which Sibbey fashions after an English estate, he is tricked into staying the night and tricked again into climbing into a bed that contains the mistress of Warwick. When he is caught by the smiling Hubert, a poker game ensues to settle once and for all whether Sibbey gets Buck, whether Turl gets Tennie, and who will buy the other slave in either event. Buddy comes to the rescue and forces Hubert's hand with a possible straight over three threes. Buck is free, Turl gets Tennie, and Hubert must buy Turl. The ending is happy, but when the hounds break into the house once again in pursuit of the fox we sense that the race is not over. And indeed it is not; Sibbey gets Buck, Ike is born, and an estate is established that will perpetuate a system of cruelty and injustice.

The story is set in a mythical past, when a man could ride for days without having to meet a woman, and when in a lifetime he did not have to dodge but one. Further, the characters are innocent. Buck and Buddy may have owned slaves, but they quartered the Negroes in the mansion and themselves in the shack. They may have locked the front door every night after putting the slaves in but they never checked the back door which became an exit as soon as the lock was turned. They may have chased a slave and half brother with dogs, they may have gambled over wedlock; but these were forms or games as silly as Sibbey's imitation of a court lady and as harmless as the episodes of a silent comedy. Although the actions of the McCaslins and the Beauchamps in this story are based on slavery, an inhuman system that will become a foundation of injustice, the individual characters are not guilty. Although their conventions are shown to be ridiculous, they are also shown to result in a humane if comic gracefulness and an idyllic equilibrium.

The story is a burlesque of the Garden of Eden, yet it is also true to the biblical form and meaning: guilt inevitably follows innocence, cruelty and destruction are inextricably bound with freedom and love. As we read further in *Go Down, Moses* we can reflect that the true focus of the opening story is not Buck, Buddy, Turl, Tennie, Sibbey, or Hubert, but Ike McCaslin. It is Ike's voice that tells the tale, although it is in his cousin Cass's idiom. Ike, past seventy, tells the story but he cannot understand it; therefore he can only repeat verbatim the words of the boy who accompanied Buck and Buddy. Perhaps this was Cass's initiation into adulthood. Ike's initiation comes later, during a bear hunt; but rather than open his eyes to the adult world with all its complexities, it seals them with blinders of fanaticism. Ike never grows beyond the self-conscious dedication of his adolescence. He can never understand the story of his older cousin because he never

develops a sense of humor. While a comic view could lead to the acceptance of absurdity for fact, Ike's heroic posture can lead only to outrage and impotence—and finally to the inhumanity of what Hawthorne called the "unpardonable sin."

The next two stories universalize the situation of "Was." "The Fire and the Hearth" establishes the anguish and heroism as well as the pathos and comic dignity of Lucas Beauchamp, the son of Turl and Tennie. "Pantaloon in Black," the most tenuously connected of the stories, establishes the present condition of injustice. A powerful young Negro is driven mad by his wife's death, kills the white man who has been exploiting the colored workers for years in a crooked dice game, and is finally lynched; ironically, the story is told by the sheriff, who misunderstands the Negro's motives, to his wife, who is annoyed at being kept from her picture show. "The Old People" brings us back to the main story line, describing Ike's ritual killing of his first deer, under the tutelage of Sam Fathers. "The Bear" deals with Ike's full initiation into manhood.

"The Bear" is confusing and incomprehensible out of context, for the story is told from Ike's point of view, and we tend to identify with the idealistic boy. It is only gradually that we come to see how Ike misinterprets his experience. Ike sees Sam Fathers, the bear, and the dog who is destined to catch it, as taintless and incorruptible; and he sees the woods as ideal. Sam Fathers, the illegitimate son of the Indian chief who sold the land to Carothers McCaslin, now old and the last of his line, teaches Ike humility, patience, self-reliance, and a love for the wilderness. But he fails to teach Ike, even though he baptizes the boy in the blood of his first deer, that destruction is a part of life, and that to retreat from this reality is not only suicide but an impetus to the destructive force. Ike never sees that his taintless and incorruptible bear kills farm animals and cuts a destructive path

through the wilderness just like the locomotive; he never admits to himself that the hunters whom he idealizes for the rest of his life are in fact killers. He is blind to the reality of destruction even as Sam trains the dun-colored dog that will track Old Ben.

Ike can see only the wilderness of James Fenimore Cooper; he is blind to the "heart of darkness" that is all the while before him. Part IV of "The Bear," is well known for the tortured, involuted style that represents Ike's mind seeking to grasp and explain an unbelievably complex, absurd, and suppressed heritage. Ike has read through the ledgers of his father and uncle, Buck and Buddy, which burlesque the chronicles of the Old Testament and portray the South in a comic microcosm. And he has discovered that his grandfather, old Carothers McCaslin, not only violated a slave but later ordered the daughter brought to the house and had another child by her—that Tomey's Turl was a product not only of exploitation and miscegenation but of incest. Ike has come of age, and after arguing with his older cousin, Cass, he decides to repudiate a heritage founded on injustice and rapacity. Believing that Sam Fathers has set him free, he gives the land to Cass and, in imitation of Christ, becomes a carpenter.

Cass tries to explain to Ike the meaning of his responsibility. He knows that Ike is relinquishing the land for the same reason that he refused to shoot Old Ben when he had a perfect chance. The explanation is in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn": Ike would forever hold the moment of his fulfillment. Cass understands that the love on the Grecian Urn had turned "Cold Pastoral," and he will accept compromise. Ike, by his attitude not only shows a possessiveness as fierce as that of the slave owner and the capitalist, but denies life, which is complex and inevitably fluid.

In "Delta Autumn" Ike, weak and nostalgic and almost eighty years of age, goes into the woods with the grandsons of the

hunters who trained him. He is left in the camp while the others go off hunting, and Roth Edmonds, grandson of Cass, asks him to deliver a packet of money. A girl carrying a small child arrives in the camp while Ike is lying in bed without his glasses or trousers. Now his blindness and impotence are brought to full realization. He learns that the girl is not only part Negro but also the grand-niece of Lucas Beauchamp; the situation involves exploitation and miscegenation and incest, Carother's ancient sin all over again. Ike can only offer the girl money, the family hunting horn, and advice. His initiation, conversion, and renunciation has served only as an evasion of human responsibility. He has loved an abstraction of the past which blinded him to human necessity, although it did not finally relieve him of his responsibility. The girl recognizes that when Ike gave Cass the land, he contributed to the grandson's recklessness. She does not want money or even a husband; she knew a moment of love and is willing to recognize that it is past. All she wants is recognition. Roth evades the simple but difficult gesture by leaving camp. Ike evades it by offering empty forms and empty words. He himself has re-enacted the original sin of Carothers McCaslin, who left his illegitimate child an inheritance, recognizing that this was cheaper than saying "Son" to a Negro.

The focus of the final story, entitled "Go Down, Moses," is not on Ike, but, as Cleanth Brooks tells us, on the community. Lucas Beauchamp's grandson, Samuel, has killed a policeman in Chicago and has been electrocuted. Lucas' wife Mollie, senile and crazed by the outrage, wants the body brought home. The story shows how the leading members of the white community accept the responsibility of hiding the truth from Mollie and of bringing home the body. Sentimentality is balanced by the fine, comic characterization of Mollie.

The history of the past twenty years has dramatized the problem of leaving

the race issue to the South, a position which Faulkner advocated explicitly to the press and implicitly in this story. But this is only one dimension of Faulkner's philosophy, just as it is a single facet of the story, and both are distorted in isolation. Marvin Klotz has recently tried to establish the superiority of the original stories to their revision and collection in *Go Down, Moses*. But while the early stories may have had greater control and a finer economy, the novel that they form

is far more ambitious. In a structure that combines various attitudes and perspective, Faulkner gives us a picture of the Southern situation and makes of his regional materials a metaphor of the human condition, which combines both love and destruction, which is complex and unbearable and at the same time capable of affirmation—but only when viewed from the humane vantage point that avoids fanaticism and accepts both comedy and tragedy.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Type of work: Novel

Author: James Baldwin (1924-)

Time: March, 1935

Locale: Harlem, New York

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

JOHN GRIMES, aged fourteen, illegitimate

ELIZABETH GRIMES, his mother

RICHARD, his father, Elizabeth's lover

GABRIEL GRIMES, Elizabeth's husband, John's stepfather, Deacon of the Temple of the Fire Baptized

DEBORAH GRIMES, Gabriel's first wife

ESTHER, Gabriel's mistress

ROYAL, the son of Gabriel and Esther

FLORENCE, Gabriel's sister

FRANK, Florence's husband

ROY, the son of Gabriel and Elizabeth, John's half brother

ELISHA, John's Sunday School teacher

Go Tell It on the Mountain is James Baldwin's first book and first novel. A relatively short work, it continues to impress readers and critics by the economy of its form and the initial statement of Baldwin's vision of the brotherhood of man, represented in the deposition of the father figure and the initiation of the son into the company of the Saints, a religious equivalent of the human brotherhood.

Passages in Baldwin's later essays refer to the autobiographical materials used in this novel, chiefly those discussing his relationship with his father, a preacher in Harlem. The impression of unity in the book is achieved in three ways: by observing the classic unity of time and

using only three related settings for the three parts; by structuring the book round Gabriel, the father; and by meticulously exploring and triumphantly concluding the struggle between John and Gabriel. This unity is especially apparent in the middle section. Part One shows the maneuvering for position between protagonist and antagonist, and Part Three the deposition of the father and the elevation of the son to equal status as a "saved" member of the congregation.

The extremely formal structure is intended to release a combination of universal meanings. In twenty-four hours the actions of four members of the Grimes family, together with their past histories summoned up by their actions, re-enact

the Christ story from John the Baptist to St. John the Divine. Elizabeth was the mother of John the Baptist and his birth was announced to Zacharias by the Archangel Gabriel; further parallels could be developed in the almost consistent use of Biblical names. The parallel is imaginative rather than literal and thus cannot be stressed obviously, but it is an effective means of stating the universal themes developed in the action of the novel, culminating in the message of love and release from bondage which is to be told "on the mountain."

The longest part by far is the second. Its setting is the Temple of the Fire Baptized, the church attended by the Grimes family on or near Lenox Avenue in Harlem. This is also the setting of the last portion of Part One and of the first section of Part Three, so that the action of Part Two is prepared at the conclusion of Part One and concluded at the beginning of Part Three. Parts One and Three are comparatively short and serve to frame the middle section, just as the central chapter of the three in Part Two is framed by short chapters on either side. Parts One and Three are chiefly concerned with the hero, John Grimes, and Part Two with Gabriel; John is supported by one of the two important female figures, his mother Elizabeth, and Gabriel is controlled by the other, his elder sister Florence. Her strong personality makes her the most overt doubter of Gabriel's self-sanctified status because she holds the key to his past in knowing the histories of his first wife, Deborah, of his mistress, Esther, and of his dead son, Royal. Royal is brought to life again in Roy, the eldest child of Gabriel and Elizabeth as an incarnation of old Adamic Gabriel before he was "saved."

The histories of Elizabeth and Florence are completed in their reveries of their dead lovers, Richard and Frank, in their chapters titled "Prayers" in Part Two. Gabriel is thus related not only to the four female characters but also to all of the male characters but Elisha.

Florence meets her husband Frank, in New York and loves him hopelessly, though he lives a sensual existence that reminds her painfully of her brother's. After he is killed in France during World War I, she is left with memories of her mother, her brother, her lover, and with a passionate interest in her step-nephew, John.

Elizabeth's "Prayer" shows a true love affair, delicately described and tragically concluded when she, too, goes North to New York with her lover; Richard, like Deborah, Royal, and Roy, falls foul of white society, is wrongfully accused of a crime, is acquitted by Elizabeth's efforts, but ends by committing suicide. Elizabeth is left with John.

The longest "Prayer" is Gabriel's. Filling more than a quarter the length of the book, it follows Florence's, encompasses the histories of all three characters, and is the center of the action and meaning. Gabriel's situation, after having been saved by the Lord's striking him on his way home from a debauch, is complicated. He has married in righteous fashion the blasted Deborah, who had been so cruelly assaulted by white men one night that she is sterile. But Gabriel longs for a son. When his affair with a maid, Esther, produces Royal, a smaller image of himself, he is caught between the feeling of sin and the feeling of pride. He disowns Esther, who dies in childbirth. Royal is brought up in Gabriel's Southern home town, and father and son meet only once. Then each offers the other protection after a lynching. After Royal has been killed in Chicago, Deborah taxes Gabriel with his fatherhood, but even in confessing it Gabriel remains unrepentant: he is a preacher and the Lord will look after and understand him. Esther was a harlot, Deborah objects, and she warns Gabriel to seek true repentance before it is too late.

Gabriel's story is concluded in Elizabeth's "Prayer." At the conclusion of Florence's "Prayer" and of Gabriel's the reader knows that Deborah has told Flor-

ence the secret of Royal. Also, Gabriel's dilemma with Elizabeth is very like that with Esther. Since Royal is dead and Deborah sterile, Roy, having cursed his father, is sulking at home; he is the son of the bond-woman standing where the true heir ought to stand. Gabriel's Old Testament views have not given him the satisfaction he feels a prophet of the Lord is entitled to; we are to understand in the irony with which Gabriel's conversion and course as a preacher have been described that James Baldwin does not approve of though he can sympathize with a kind of religion that omits love because love seems to suggest sensuality.

Gabriel's simple views are seen in John's excursion on the morning of his birthday. He descends in the Hell of the movie house across Sixth Avenue, the Inferno of good and ungodly living, contrasting with the piety and poverty of his home. Having sinned on Sixth Avenue, John returns to find a minor catastrophe and his father's prohibitions justified: Roy has been slashed with a razor during a gang war between white and Negro hoodlums and his father is in a towering and righteous rage with everyone but Roy. But Aunt Florence stands up to Gabriel, telling him that he was born wild and will die wild because nothing can be changed. Gabriel is unredeemed and, in his righteousness, unredeemable.

In Elizabeth's "Prayer" we see Gabriel in New York after the death of Deborah, trying to change those around him and ready to begin founding his line again. Through Florence he meets Elizabeth and John as a baby attracts him enormously. He marries Elizabeth to forgive her her sin—Gabriel is always righteous—and begins to beget Roy, Sally, and the coming baby on her; Gabriel is also highly sensual. The old Adam in him cannot be done away with, as Florence has warned, but his fury is not allowed to wreck the lives of others. For the Lord himself intervenes in two ways that Gabriel hardly expected: John is saved by the Lord, and Gabriel is damned in learn-

ing that Florence has Deborah's letter about Esther and Royal, and that she will surely pass it on to Elizabeth and John, if and when need arises. Gabriel is thus defeated by his own nature, by his past, and by his stepson.

Against this towering male figure John pits his strength during the twenty-four hours of the novel. John's battle is to reach salvation or God without acknowledging Gabriel as his father; he must reconcile flesh and spirit so as to deny Gabriel's combination of gross sensuality and righteousness, or he will simply turn into another Gabriel, a "black" angel.

John triumphs and is triumphed over in Part Three, "The Threshing-Floor," which carries straight on from the dramatic conclusion to Part Two when he is suddenly stricken by the power of the Lord and finds himself thrown down upon the "threshing-floor" in the center of the Saints. The songs of the Saints return to the theme: "To walk in Jerusalem just like John." This night decides the issue whether John can walk there by somehow getting directly to the Lord and not through his stepfather. In an apocalyptic vision he fights his last battle with the forces of darkness, represented by his father, and thus fights free of his shameful past and regains his real father's independent spirit. Richard is reborn in John as John is reborn and baptized that Sunday morning, as Elizabeth, Florence, and Gabriel realize when they all leave the Temple and walk down Lenox Avenue to meet the new day.

The completely Negro cast, settings, and speech are highly relevant to the themes of John's initiation and rebirth into a world of love as against sensual enjoyment, a particularly fine but necessary discrimination for a boy of fourteen in Harlem; further, the movement of the novel from the harshly realistic light of Saturday in Harlem through the darkness of the Tarrying Service on Saturday night to the clean Sunday dawn gains figurative value from the blackness of Gabriel and others. This is, then, a

Negro novel in the truest sense: human problems achieve a special and unique coloring without ever becoming "Negro" or "colored" social problems.

THE GOLDEN APPLES

Type of work: Interconnected short stories

Author: Eudora Welty (1909-)

Time: 1900-1940

Locale: "Morgana" Mississippi

First published: 1949

Principal characters:

KING MACLAIN, the wandering patriarch of the town

MRS. SNOWDIE HUDSON MACLAIN, his wife, an albino

RANDALL MACLAIN and

EUGENE MACLAIN, the twin sons of King and Snowdie

MRS. FATE RAINEY, the town gossip

VIRGIE RAINEY, her daughter and the protégée of Miss Eckhart

MISS ECKHART, a half-crazed music teacher

LOCH MORRISON, a boy who saves a drowning girl and sees things wrong and yet peculiarly right

CASSIE MORRISON, his sister who sees things correctly, but lacks depth

EASTER, a girl saved from drowning by Loch

The Golden Apples, first published in 1949, is a group of seven short stories, interrelated and held together by their characters, their common setting, Morgana, Mississippi, and their common theme, the wanderer's search for happiness. The stories were all published separately, but taken together they cover some forty years in the lives of the inhabitants of Morgana and form a complete drama in which they are engaged. The list of a *dramatis personae* on the first page of the book indicates that we are to consider the work as a unified whole. The related stories are in some ways Miss Welty's attempt to create a regional world like Faulkner's, in this case MacLain County, not Yoknapatawpha, but her focus is neither upon the Sartoris nor upon the Snopeses but on the comfortable upper-middle class and their everyday activities such as piano recitals, camping trips for the young girls, gossip between neighbors, and funerals. This world is examined from all sides, extending even to the structural device of point of view. Thus the first story, "Shower of Gold" is narrated by the gossipy Mrs. Rainey, whose matter-of-factness con-

trasts with the mystery of what she reveals about King MacLain and his influence upon the community. "June Recital" is revealed through the eyes of two witnesses: Loch Morrison, the young boy who sees everything wrong yet peculiarly right, and older Cassie, his sister, who sees correctly but does not share the insights or life force of her brother. "The Whole World Knows" is revealed through the eyes of Randall MacLain, a somewhat blurred vision that discovers a certain truth as it re-enacts what it observed. Whatever the point of view, Miss Welty is able to get beneath the veneer of middle-class comfort and scratch the surface of "place" to get at the hidden lives and hidden mysteries of her characters.

The common setting is not the only unifying factor for the stories. They are held together by Yeats's poem, "The Song of the Wandering Aengus" from which the title of the collection is taken. This poem breaks into Cassie's mind as she tells her narrative, and in a very real way it is the symbolic key to the meaning of the work as a whole. The poem itself is about a quest, a search for golden apples,

representing beauty, poetry, ultimate meaning, a search which is marked by the pursuit of a vision, a mystery where a silver trout becomes a "glimmering girl" before the eyes of Aengus. The people of Morgana are also wanderers, in search of the meaningful that will transform the commonness of their lives and make the name of the town as magical as it sounds in its resemblance to the name Morgan la Fay. This search reveals the mysterious beauty that lies beneath the surfaces of their lives, and it is brought out by Miss Welty in an attempt to transform them. This movement and interest is typical of most of Eudora Welty's work.

The tone of the stories is rather unlike Miss Welty's earlier fiction, for there is not so much variety of mood here as in her early work, but rather a pervasive feeling of solemnity and sadness, even in such works as "Moon Lake," in which a "silver trout," this time a girl named Easter, is presumably drowned and brought back to shore, but is resurrected by Loch Morrison, a Boy Scout. Here the trout does not become a "glimmering girl" but remains a choking twelve-year-old with mud and blood coming from her mouth. The mystery of life is here, but the beauty is somewhat harder to perceive. There has been an acceptance of the symbols of Yeats, but an unwillingness to accept the direction in which the symbols lead. The search is there, but there is the sadness of the knowledge that there will be no glimmering girl.

Yet despite the solemnity and sadness there is the affirmation of human life and its values. In *The Golden Apples* the journey through innocence to experience and meaning is painful, and often the wanderers' knowledge is only of their predicament, not of its solution; but it is knowledge and knowledge won from experience. This affirmation is tied to the region, but the universal is symbolized in the regional, as is so often the case with Southern writers of today. Miss Welty's manner of achieving this universality of the human predicament is unique. She

evokes the universal by invoking the mythic and the magical. She takes a real world, Mississippi, and makes it legendary, Morgana.

The title of the book is but the first hint of the pervasive use of myth and symbol. The poem from which the title is taken sets the mythical mood and the character and events are consonant with it. There is the figure of King MacLain, who seems to grow out of the character of Don McInnis in Miss Welty's early story, "Asphodel," a story which also makes use of myth for its mood of gentle fantasy. King first appears in "Shower of Gold" and reappears throughout most of the other stories, flitting in and out of the action like a golden butterfly. Morgana is in MacLain County, in fact, and thus even geographically the King's presence is to be felt. King finally comes to rest in the last story, "The Wanderers," but even there his vitality at the funeral of Mrs. Rainey is a source of amazement and admiration for Virgie Rainey. MacLain is not only king but also Zeus. There are many conscious allusions to him in this role. As a sort of wandering pagan god, he lies in wait for unsuspecting girls in the woods and peoples the town with his progeny. "Sir Rabbit" is a story of such a seduction. There is something beautiful as well as slyly humorous in his comings and goings, as we see all the children who have inherited their golden hair from his golden touch upon their mothers. Mrs. Rainey tells us in "Shower of Gold" that King has run away to the gold fields. Whenever he returns, he brings some of it with him.

There are many people in the town who are related to him. Randall and Eugene MacLain are not his only children. There are broad hints that Loch Morrison might be his child, and also Easter, the resurrected orphan girl in "Moon Lake." They both share his preoccupation with the vital forces of life and are wanderers like himself. Every one of the seven stories has a character related to him. Thus he is intimately connected with the

golden apples as a unifying symbol; indeed he is more symbol than human, and connected with the wandering search that the quest for the golden apples entails. All of his fellow seekers and roamers are brought together in the final story, "The Wanderers," and each of these wanderers, like Aengus in Yeats's poem, has his own "song."

Perhaps the most attractive and memorable of these is Virgie Rainey, whose name connects her with King in his "Shower of Gold." Her father's name is Fate, and she is the best musician in all Morgana. Virgie is the protégée of Miss Eckhart, the outsider who is the music teacher for all of Morgana and who remains one of the most pathetic characters in the book. Miss Eckhart herself belongs to the large group of Welty grotesques, lonely and isolated characters who have been warped by their lack of love. In "June Recital" Miss Eckhart escapes from a mental institution to try to burn down the house in which she has taught her many lessons, giving the town music and getting nothing in return.

Virgie is Miss Eckhart's pupil, but not her disciple. Music has set her free, and she moves towards freedom by leaving Miss Eckhart to become the pianist at the silent movies and from there to various strangers passing through, to the final escape after her mother's death in "The Wanderers." She is joined as a wanderer with Randall MacLain, inheritor of his father's domain, for he is mayor of Morgana; in "The Whole World Knows" he creates tragedy by involving another in his quest. Maideen Sumrall commits suicide because Ran does not seem to be able to see beyond his own problems and

thus realize that others are seekers also. Eugene MacLain discovers what it means to be a wanderer on a beach in California, where he has gone in company with a chance-met Spanish musician. Loch Morrison is the blower of the golden horn, the Boy Scout in charge of reveille at Moon Lake. Easter is the orphan who wants to be a singer. All the wanderers have their song.

The one constant feature of all these songs is that they are sung in silence, by solitary singers. Virgie accepts the gift of Beethoven from Miss Eckhart, but the gift does not bind her to the giver. That is the tragic and perhaps ennobling aspect of the wanderers. They give the gift of love, but love truly given separates and does not create a recognizable union. Those who truly know the value of the golden apples realize that the search is never over. What union there is remains a union in search of the unattainable. This is the community that is felt by some of the wanderers, notably Virgie. They are all victims of the search and that is the reason for the pervasive sadness. But in their common circumstance as victims they are also all heroes. Miss Welty expressed this idea well and characteristically at the end of "The Wanderers" by referring to the myth of Medusa and Perseus. To cut off the Medusa's head was heroic, but it revealed a horror about life that is life's separateness. Life is a condition in which both the Medusa and Perseus are ever-present. The glory is in the struggle; the tragedy in the lack of completion of that struggle. The golden apples are more beautiful because they will always be on the tree.

THE GOLDEN BOUGH

Type of work: Anthropology

Author: Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941)

First published: 1890-1915

The Golden Bough, perhaps the most famous work in modern anthropology,

began appearing in 1890. Originally planned for two volumes, Frazer eventu-

ally expanded it to twelve, the last of which appeared in 1915. In 1936 he added a supplementary volume (*Aftermath*). The work is undoubtedly best known in the one-volume abridgment which Frazer published in 1922, a volume revised by Theodore Gaster in 1959.

Though many of Frazer's ideas have been superceded in the intervening years, his overall thesis has stood the test of time, and its influence outside the field of anthropology has been unprecedented. The influence of Frazer's work upon the poetry, fiction, and drama of the twentieth century was phenomenal; one has only to mention the notes T. S. Eliot appended to *The Waste Land* as one of the best-known examples.

From the dramatic opening scene, in which we see the doomed priest of Nemi stalking the grove of Diana at Aricia on the Italian coast, sword in hand, waiting for his unknown rival who will assail him, murder him, and become the priest in turn, Frazer investigates one basic theme. He pursues the meaning in myth and ritual of the sacrifice of the heroic leader, whose people are renewed through his death. Industriosly ransacking accounts of missionaries and travelers, Frazer transferred his data into huge notebooks from which he synthesized his parallel myths of the Near East and Europe, and composed his theories about the relations of myth to ritual, magic to religion, hero to god, leader to people. Frazer's power to synthesize is undoubtedly the key to his impact upon the intellectual climate of his time and ours. He never left his Cambridge study to investigate these matters at first hand; all his data was taken from correspondents and diarists. He studied the information thus acquired for its symbolic meaning, tracing the relationship between myths and religious rituals to the cultures which produced them and to those cultures that came later. As Freud showed man the profoundly significant world of the unconsciousness, Frazer showed our culture the elements and meanings of its group

behavior, generally hidden in the past but often still alive in folk customs and belief.

Frazer's quest for the meaning of the life and death of the priest of Nemi took him through the mythology of the Mediterranean area and Europe. He first discusses magic and religion, suggesting that religion is the civilized offspring of primitive magic. Religion comes out of what he called "homoeopathic" or sympathetic magic, which associates acts through similarity. When the tribe or clan desires rain, the magician will command it through pouring water on the parched soil; the priest will invoke it by the same act. Frazer also postulates "contagious" magic, in which primitive man believes that things once associated can never be separated in the ideal sense. Here he cites the practice, known widely through voodoo, of endeavoring to harm a real person by maltreating a symbolic representation containing the intended victim's real hair or nail parings.

Frazer suggests that the primitive magician first became the tribal priest or medicine man (known to today's anthropologist as the shaman, from the name for this vocation among the Manchurians). Then, as civilization developed from primitive culture, he became the sacred king of his people. Retaining his religious import, this king in the highly developed ancient civilizations of the Near East became divine. Thus the myths of sacrificial death and spiritual rebirth are really stories that reveal the regimen of the king's rule. Through describing the myriad of totem and taboo customs that saturate the ritualized existence of the divine king, Frazer draws a portrait of a being whose life was set apart from the rest of the people by their need to solve cultural problems through his life and death. The physical and spiritual well-being of the tribe was literally dependent upon the well-being of the priest-king; hence the extraordinary number of rules (totem and taboo) governing his existence. Frazer also collects a number of stories of

primitive people who either deposed or actually killed their shaman-king when his health or potency failed. This ritual death would explain, for Frazer, why the old priest at Nemi expected attack from a mysterious stranger who actually had been chosen to succeed him.

To show how the life and death of the king is related to myth, Frazer compiled parallel incidents from the tales of pagan deities such as Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysus, Demeter, and Virbius. Adonis was said to be born of tree bark; his life was linked with fruition and his death was celebrated in the early spring. Killed by a boar on Mt. Lebanon, his body was said to join the land, for the red mud that washed down the rivers in the spring rains was said to be his blood. Thus the god literally fertilizes the land, and his resurrection, and the land's, is celebrated shortly after. By all these rites, Frazer maintains, primitive man in his ignorant simplicity confuses man with the earth and wish with fulfillment, trying to influence, even coerce nature itself, through homoeopathic magic. Frazer associates the death of Osiris with the flooding of the Nile, upon whose waters the fertility of Egyptian civilization depended. Osiris, like Orpheus, is said to have been torn apart by his sacred murderers and his body scattered to insure fecundity of land, animals, and men.

Other myths relate of the eating of the slain god for his power and holiness, and this obvious forerunner of transubstantiation in Christian communion Frazer traces in numerous cults. Cannibalism and the eating of sacred wine and bread are similar patterns of sympathetic magic.

Along with rites designed to bring health and prosperity, other primitive rituals were supposed to ward off danger and evil. In many rites a sacrificial victim or scapegoat served as a representative of general atonement for a whole people. Frazer suggests that frequently the sacrificed god served as a scapegoat, thus introducing the idea of sacrifice to later culture and to the literature created by

civilization. He links this phenomenon with later festivals of saturnalia and carnival and their kings of misrule, who are allowed free conduct and then deposed.

Fire festivals throughout Europe are linked by Frazer both to seasonal religious ritual and to human and animal sacrifices. He suggests that the life-giving property of the sun is thus invoked, and the destructive power of fire is appeased through such complex ritual, especially at midsummer, which Frazer found to be the most widespread religious rite known to Aryans.

Finally, using the legend of the Norse god Balder, Frazer draws the threads of his theme together. Balder is alleged to have been slain by a branch of mistletoe and burned in a great funeral fire. The parasitical mistletoe is strange and magical because it is rootless, and it grows upon oaks; thus both mistletoe and oak are sacred. Frazer then returns to the sacred oak grove on the shore of Lake Nemi. The priest of the sacred wood is a representative of the divine king, the doomed god of organic life who must die that his spirit and power may be propagated throughout the world. The yellow, waxy mistletoe represents the spirit of the oak, the sacred tree, and is the golden bough carried by Vergil's Aeneas through the world of the dead in order to show the power of life available to the hero of myth and epic that enables him to triumph over death.

Later anthropologists and linguists have revised many of Frazer's speculations about the material he accumulated. Ironically, some of the principal revisions involve his primary concern. The sacred grove at Nemi was not of oak, and the famous bough was probably generalized greenery carried by supplicants in religious ceremony everywhere. The shrine at Nemi, most now agree, seems to have been some sort of sanctuary for escaped slaves, not a temple of a seasonal god of death and resurrection.

Also, scholars today find that Frazer was entirely too simplistic and logical in

interpreting his material according to the tenets of his orderly Darwinian mind. He calls almost all men living in cultures before the birth of the city-state "primitive," but we now know how much stratification there was in so-called primitive culture. Religious ritual did not grow out of magical practice, for magic is a separate cultural phenomenon. Most of Frazer's deities are not merely seasonal or vegetable gods; they are also embodiments of divine force and heroic human qualities. Osiris, for example, is more the avatar of the sacredness of the Pharaoh than he is a vegetable deity. Frazer tended to oversimplify and often to denigrate his primitives, in tracing a too mechanical progress to the Victorian world. He was also handicapped through his method, for he, of necessity, relied on second-hand accounts compiled by amateur travelers, many of whom did not really know the cultures about which they reported and rarely knew the languages and dialects

spoken in the regions they had visited.

But when one has made all these qualifications, he still finds, says T. H. Gaster, Frazer's contemporary editor, that this work has contributed more to the intellectual and artistic climate of our time than any other in the field of anthropology. Frazer's compilation is so vast that everywhere he turns up materials of myth and ritual that lie at the root of our customs and our literature, and survive in folk customs still associated with Christmas, Easter, and May Day. Frazer's work remains the most influential anthropological study known to literate people who are not students of the subject. Despite the voluminous number of examples cited by Frazer, the work possesses distinctive clarity and great dramatic drive. Its drama still moves because Frazer's primary plot is itself analogous to myth: the quest for the secret of the life and death of the haunted priest in the grove at Nemi.

THE GONCOURT JOURNALS

Authors: Edmond (1822-1896) and Jules (1830-1870) de Goncourt

First published: Three series in 9 volumes, 1887-1896

The Goncourt Journals were begun on December 2, 1851, the day on which Louis-Napoleon dissolved the National Assembly and made himself dictator, as a first step toward becoming Emperor of the French. The journals span the years of the Second Empire in France.

It was the intention of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt to capture and record "momentary reality" in their journals. They carefully noted their impressions and the actual words of men of their time. As in their realistic novels they tried to be objective, so in their journals they claim as their own an attempt at complete impartiality. Though Edmond was eight years older than Jules, they thought as one, and there is nothing to suggest any difference in opinion concerning the correct interpretation of any event or circumstance. The journals are

in fact far from being objective or impartial. Part of their interest lies in the light these records of people and the age cast upon the personal preferences and prejudices of the Goncourts.

In the net they cast, the Goncourts catch not only the most outstanding men of letters of the period, but in addition acquaintances of the latter. Though Victor Hugo, for example, could not possibly be present in Paris at that time, since he was in exile in the Channel Islands, his literary or spiritual presence is very much felt; for both Gautier and Sainte-Beuve—friends of the Goncourts—had been very close to Hugo, and frequently reminisced about him.

The brothers were masters of the word portrait in miniature. To the initial portrait, new touches and shadings were added over the years, until eventually the

person represented in it seems to acquire a life of his own within the journals. Moreover, so great is the Goncourts' success in revealing to the reader the antipathies and enthusiasms of the persons they describe, that even writers of previous centuries—Voltaire, Diderot, Molière, Corneille—seem to be given a breath of new life in these pages.

The Goncourt brothers did not depend fully upon their writing for an income. However, they were members of a relatively new breed of men in France; that is, they were professional men of letters, imaginative writers in the hire of a society with whose ideals they did not necessarily agree. The brothers share with other artists of the period characteristic preoccupations and dislikes. Thus, as a document giving information about the current of ideas during the Second Empire, the journals are precious.

The exasperation caused by the severity of censorship under Napoleon the Third is shown as not being by any means peculiar to Baudelaire and Flaubert. In the journals, it emerges as a pattern of frustration. Similarly, Baudelaire's preference for the town over the country and his very fear of nature are shown to be sentiments that the Goncourts understand and feel also; by a process of extension that the reader will readily operate, this aversion will be viewed as rather characteristic of the age. The Goncourts, with their extremely refined sensibility, their artistic tastes, and their Parisian life, voice their hostility to Nature in several places. In one they ask whether a thinking man does not feel ill at ease in the country, as if in the presence of an enemy.

While it is true that the Goncourts did seem to prefer the city to the country, this fact should not be interpreted as a stamp of approval for the industrialization and mercantilism spreading throughout France in the 1850's and 1860's. In places, there are references to the "American Babylon" that the Goncourts feared France was becoming. Their distaste for

the "Exposition Universelle" of 1867 is made very plain. For them, it was a symbol and a summing up of the "Americanization" and industrialization which they resented. In another interesting entry, the brothers lay bare what was for them a symptom of creeping commercialism in France: they point out that in the bookshops of Paris the bookseller has given up the practice of leaving out a chair for his customers. The new emphasis, the Goncourts claim, is upon buying, not browsing. Their distaste, incidentally, was common to many writers of the time.

Unlike the creations of Balzac's vast imagination, the real literary figures who appear and reappear in the journals do not come with their price tag, their holdings of property and money, attached. Nonetheless, there is, throughout the journals, a keen awareness of the new importance of money in the nineteenth century, a sense both of the servitude it can impose and the liberty it can permit. Even the disinterested Sainte-Beuve is seen to reflect ruefully upon the meager income which will be his for three whole years of hard work as a critic.

At times, the Goncourts let fall a remark which seems at first rather insignificant, yet makes the reader pause to reflect. Thus, after mentioning that they have no ear for music, the Goncourts indicate that this weakness is shared by Gautier, while they even claim that Lamartine, Balzac, and Hugo actively disliked music.

In places, the Goncourts reveal a truly poetic talent. They show the poet's partiality for the metaphor, and they have the ability to express almost any idea in the form of an image. Thus they will compare a house and its occupants to a living body. The artists (the head, the Goncourts eloquently claim) always seem to live on the top floor; on the ground floor are to be found the shopkeepers, the legs; in between, of course, are the bourgeois—a great digestive tract.

Needless to say, the journals are filled with entries giving an insight into the life and works of the Goncourts themselves.

One can find, for example, the chronicle of the last sickness of their devoted servant Rose. One discovers with them, as it were, her carefully hidden vice, her licentiousness, and the pangs of conscience to which it made her subject. There is more than a suggestion here of the theme of their novel *Germinie Lacerteux*. Staring from every page is their old-maidish meticulousness, their highly individual tastes and fancies. Their cure for boredom at one stage is the purchase of two old, silver-gilt embossed Saint-Cloud teapots in a box with a fleur-de-lis lock. It is fascinating to remark that as far as the eighteenth century was concerned, the Goncourts were interested far less in the "philosophies" than in the handicrafts of that century. Their satisfaction with their collection of objects of art and their pride at introducing the French public to the arts of the Orient are made obvious.

In observing themselves pass through successive moods, the Goncourts frequently translate for the reader the torments of a hypersensitive nature struggling to find expression in a play or a novel. Their frustrations, as well as the joy of creation, are often recorded in significant detail; the register of the stages of the creative process make for most interesting reading.

The name of the Goncourts will always be associated with the Magny dinners. It was at these dinners, arranged to be held every two weeks at the instigation of Sainte-Beuve, that the brothers were best able to observe under one roof some of the leading figures of the intellectual world of the Second Empire. To be sure, they complained, in an entry dated June 6, 1865, after they had been attending the dinners for over two years, that these affairs were characterized mainly by the lack of daring and the paucity of original talent shown by the guests attending them. Be this as it may, the Goncourts' impressions of dinners and guests constitute a most important part of the journals.

Among the names which are mentioned most frequently in connection with the dinners is that of Sainte-Beuve. However, Gautier, Flaubert, Taine, Renan, Claude Bernard, and others come and go.

In spite of a footnote suggesting that their remarks about Sainte-Beuve were dictated by unbiased, scrupulous observation, the reader comes away with the impression that the masterly writer of *Port-Royal* has been treated with singular harshness by the writers of the journals. Here, as in all their portraits, the Goncourts introduce Sainte-Beuve to the reader by first offering a description of his appearance, comparing his pale forehead and ruddy cheeks to the impressions of a provincial librarian whose book-filled cloister is over a cellar filled with rich red wines. The method used to describe Sainte-Beuve is, ironically, the one that the critic himself advocated. After watching him closely and recording his words and thoughts and even handshake, the brothers later attempt to record Sainte-Beuve's patterns of thinking, while never losing sight of his appearance, filling in the picture as they see it. The completed portrait is scarcely appealing, being suggestive of ugliness and pettiness, while barely indicating the greatness of the subject.

Occasionally, a note of succinct smugness pierces in an entry such as that of December 14, 1868, which records that Zola, whom they called their admirer, lunched with them that day.

The vagaries of Gustave Flaubert's vast imagination and his extravagance, recorded in detail by the Goncourts, provide some intriguing information about that great novelist. In any century but the nineteenth, Flaubert, as seen through the eyes of the Goncourts, would have seemed unique in his immensity. The Goncourts also record in their journals the massive enthusiasms, aversions, and extravagances of Théophile Gautier, with whom they were very friendly, as well as memories and impressions re-

tained by others of Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo. Hugo, living in exile, could not be present at the Magny dinners. Absent, his literary presence was nonetheless felt. His immense stature does on occasion cast a large shadow on the group around the table at the Magny dinners.

With Jules' last, long illness, Edmond was to take up the pen which his brother had been forced to let drop. Edmond's courage in continuing to note down his impressions in spite of his great feeling of discouragement lends a new grandeur to the journals and allows the reader to forget the brothers' occasional pettiness, their harshness toward some associates, their biased indulgence toward others.

The Goncourt Journals have been rather neglected in recent years by the casual reader, if not by the critic. Diffuse they are, and sometimes petty, yet they are most readable as well as a rich source of information about the temper of the Second Empire period. They flatter the reader by letting him view from close up some of the outstanding men of letters of the nineteenth century. Though not always entirely reliable in their judgments, the Goncourts have the supreme merit of making the reader wish to go on exploring the writings of the novelists and playwrights and poets to whom he has been introduced informally.

THE GOOD SOLDIER: SCHWEIK

Type of work: Novel

Author: Jaroslav Hašek (1883-1923)

Type of plot: Military satire

Time of plot: World War I

Locale: Bohemia, Austria

First published: 1920-1923

Principal characters:

JOSEF SCHWEIK, a soldier

JINDRICH LUKASH, a Lieutenant, Schweik's superior

OTTO KATZ, a chaplain

COLONEL KRAUS, Lieutenant Lukash's superior

LIEUTENANT DUB, a former schoolmaster

Critique:

Schweik is probably the strangest war hero to return from the battlefields of World War I. Written originally in Czech, *The Good Soldier: Schweik* found its way into many recent histories of German literature. One reason for this increased interest is that German literature was not able to provide such a satirical masterpiece of the follies of war. Although the novel never achieved the popularity of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, it nevertheless became one of the war classics of the period. The superb characterization of Schweik is frequently compared to Bertolt Brecht's dramatic power. Another

reason for classifying this novel as German literature is the fact that Hašek lived in Prague at a time when German literature had its greatest success there. Franz Werfel, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Max Brod all belonged to the active circle of German-speaking writers in Prague. Franz Kafka was a friend of Hašek long before *The Good Soldier: Schweik* was written. Hašek himself, the son of a mathematics teacher, was born in Prague. To earn a living, he started to work as a bank clerk, but soon he devoted himself exclusively to writing. Before World War I he had published sixteen volumes of short stories. During the war

THE GOOD SOLDIER: SCHWEIK by Jaroslav Hasek. Translated by Paul Selver. By permission of Curtis Brown Ltd. Copyright, 1930, by Doubleday, Doran & Co. Renewed, 1958. All rights reserved.

he was taken prisoner on the Eastern Front and spent several years in Russia as a prisoner of war. His experiences as a soldier are reflected in his novel. Hašek died in 1923 when he had only four volumes of the planned six volumes about Schweik completed; however the book was sufficient in scope to bring alive the unforgettable Schweik. It is not surprising that the unperturbed Schweik, an antithesis of all things for which Prussian militarism stands, found no friends in the Third Reich, where the book was burned. After World War II *The Good Soldier: Schweik* found a larger audience than ever before. In his preface to the book Hašek notes, that there are unrecognized heroes who surpass figures like Napoleon or Alexander the Great. Schweik probably would not have understood the meaning of such comparisons, and would have replied modestly to all inquiries about his importance: "I am Schweik."

The Story:

Schweik, by profession a dog trader, was discharged from his military service saddled with the classification of "feeble minded." However, the shots at Sarajevo, which signaled the beginning of World War I, brought Schweik back into the army. A careless remark soon led to his arrest, but he convinced the police of his feeble-minded condition and was sent to a lunatic asylum. Medical authorities were so much irritated by the cheerful Schweik that they classified him as a malingering of weak intellect, and he was sent back to the police. The ability of Schweik to give the most innocent and confusing replies to all bureaucratic inquiries caused the police to send him home again.

When the Austrian Army suffered its first major losses, however, the war ministry decided that Schweik should be conscripted into military service once more. Schweik came to the medical examination in a wheel chair, with crutches by his side to indicate the bad state of his

rheumatism. The army doctor, who was in the habit of finding everybody fit for service, was incensed by Schweik's performance. Thus the first station of the good soldier Schweik was the military prison. Treatment in the infirmary of the military prison was aimed at speeding up the desire of each patient to serve his fatherland away from the infirmary.

The major diversion in the prison was the Mass celebrated by the chaplain, Otto Katz, a priest whose love for alcohol surpassed by far his dedication to priestly duties. Otto Katz, impressed by the qualities of Schweik, requested, that the soldier be assigned to him as an orderly. In this capacity Schweik became indispensable as an altar boy during Mass, as a helper at various drinking bouts, and as a stimulating partner during unorthodox religious debates.

But Schweik's good fortune did not last long. Chaplain Katz was as fond of gambling as he was of wine. During a poker game Schweik was lost by Katz to Lieutenant Lukash, who was beloved by his subordinates but disliked by his superiors. Now Schweik was expected to handle many delicate situations in connection with Lieutenant Lukash's love for the opposite sex. Frequently the lieutenant despaired over the embarrassing predicaments which seemed to develop each time Schweik was handling a project.

One day Schweik procured a dog. The animal, which he gave to Lieutenant Lukash, actually belonged to one of Lukash's superiors, Colonel Kraus. When the lieutenant took an evening stroll, he had a most unpleasant encounter with Colonel Kraus, who recognized his missing pet. The colonel arranged for a prompt transfer of the lieutenant. Thus Lieutenant Lukash and orderly Schweik became members of a battalion destined for front-line duty.

On the train Schweik managed to insult a fellow passenger who turned out to be an Inspector General. He also inadvertently released the emergency brake. Unable to pay the requested fine, he was

taken from the train, much to the delight of Lieutenant Lukash, who had not yet recovered from the incident of the dog. The train moved on without Schweik, who soon found himself considered a mistreated war hero by the people at the railroad station. A collection was taken up to pay his fine, and he was entertained with free beer. Later military police arrested Schweik when they discovered that he was without papers of identification. A cross examination, conducted at headquarters, frustrated the investigating officer, and he ordered Schweik to proceed on foot to the destination point which he was supposed to have reached by train.

Schweik, marched off in the wrong direction and was arrested as a suspected spy. An ambitious sergeant, interpreting Schweik's confusing way of answering questions as highly intelligent evasions, considered him a prize catch. Schweik was transferred to higher authorities, but the captain in charge preferred to believe the implausible explanation of Schweik to the more implausible report which the sergeant had prepared. Schweik was returned to his regiment and to the surprised Lieutenant Lukash, who, determined that Schweik should not be of any further embarrassment to him, ordered Schweik transferred to the regimental dungeon for unauthorized absence from duty. However, after three days Lieutenant Lukash's superior officer, who nourished a grudge against him, sent Schweik back to the lieutenant to resume his old position, and Lieutenant Lukash was forced to accept the unavoidable situation.

Before long Lieutenant Lukash discovered a lady whom he considered a good prospect for another amorous adventure. Schweik was assigned to deliver a letter to the lady, but the letter reached her husband instead. Thus the delivery of the letter turned into a street fight, which in turn resulted in Schweik's arrest and a great deal of unfavorable publicity

around the garrison.

Lieutenant Lukash was now appointed company commander of a unit on its way to the Russian front; he also had strict orders to take Schweik along as a company orderly. In his new duty post Schweik's first assignment was that of telephone operator, a duty which gave him ample opportunity to confuse the preparations for the transfer to the front. His next contribution to frustrate the war effort occurred when he exercised again his common-sense judgment. A coding system based on the second volume of a novel was to be used by the regiment; however, Schweik distributed the first volume because he was of the opinion that everybody should start reading a book at the beginning. As a result, the regiment was without a coding system.

The most disliked officer of the regiment was Lieutenant Dub, a former schoolteacher who considered it his duty to transplant barracks drill discipline to the front line. Several episodes with Schweik convinced Lieutenant Dub that he had enough material for court-martial proceedings against Schweik. Then, during a short day in a small village, Schweik was ordered to look for Lieutenant Dub; he discovered his superior drunk in a brothel. This discovery gave Schweik an opportunity to ridicule the lieutenant in front of all the soldiers. Schweik was also valuable in assisting the quartermaster to find billets and supplies.

Schweik's last assignment was an order from Lieutenant Lukash to find the road to the next village. Schweik, trusting his common sense, disregarded the map and lost his way. When he approached a pond, he found a Russian prisoner of war taking a bath. The sight of Schweik caused the Russian to flee stark naked. Schweik could not resist the temptation to try on the Russian's uniform. At this moment soldiers arrived to recapture the escaped "enemy." Schweik was assigned to a gang of Russian prisoners repairing the railroad leading to the Russian front.

THE GREAT PLAINS

Type of work: History

Author: Walter Prescott Webb (1888-1963)

First published: 1931

Since *The Great Plains* was published in 1931 it has become one of the cardinal texts of American Studies, the most significant extension within the United States of the ideas of Frederick Jackson Turner, for despite criticism of both Turner and Webb, their work has served its purpose, that of setting up new frames around known facts and encouraging the exploration of the blank spaces within those borders. But *The Great Plains* belongs in two other contexts. One is the great development of Southwestern studies associated with people like J. Frank Dobie and John Lomax in the first four decades of this century. The second is the canon of the four historical works by Walter Prescott Webb, of which this is the second. The four began with a commissioned history of the Texas Rangers. Contemplation of the effect of the introduction of the six-shooter on the Plains became the germ and center of *The Great Plains*. Webb later turned to consider the imperial-colonial relations of Eastern capital and Western development in *Divided We Stand*. Finally he produced his own expanded version of Turner's "frontier thesis" in *The Great Frontier*, an interpretation of European and world history since 1492 in terms of the influence of the frontier on the metropolis.

The genesis of Webb's thesis about the Great Plains is briefly described in the preface of this work, in his presidential address in 1958 to the American Historical Society, and in his rejection of Fred A. Shannon's "Appraisal" of the book for the Social Science Research Council in 1939. "Appraisal," Webb's rejection of it, and the conference which involved author and appraiser were the severest testing of the work. The summary of the conference showed that it is impossible to use or

even to obtain all the facts needed to support such a general thesis as Webb's, and that the decision did not affect the growing use of the book by all sorts of people from English students to game wardens. The continuing appeal rests on the scope and novelty of the thesis, as well as on its studied presentation. The orderly sequence of chapters and the clear divisions within chapters are typical of Webb's work, as is the use of long quotations and epigraphs as well as the use of questions to suggest hypotheses.

Walter Prescott Webb is not a social scientist but an institutional historian whose thesis developed out of and back into his famous Frontier Seminar at the University of Texas. The subtitle, "A Study in Environment and Institutions," states his intention to study the influence of the former on the latter, and the guiding genius of his work is probably that figure who lurks behind Turner's thesis: John Wesley Powell, Director of the United States Geological Survey. In accepting the postulate that man does change in response to his environment Webb follows a long line of distinguished historical writers from Buckle and Taine to Ellsworth Huntington; their task has usually been to assert the sudden illumination which contemplation of one historical fact has provided: in Turner's case the census of 1890; in Webb's the six-shooter. Although Turner imagined the frontier as a series of bands of transition between savage and civilized life, Webb depends heavily on a fixed geographical frontier, the ninety-eighth meridian, as the cause of so sharp a change in human institutions that he calls it an "institutional fault." Webb and Turner are alike, however, in that they are students of variables in history, not of a continuing tradition or line of development; further,

they are unlike most historians who prefer to see change as the result of time, not of place. The difference between Webb and his critic, Shannon, has been summarized as simply that between two kinds of historians: those who see the woods and those who study the trees.

The Great Plains consists of an introductory chapter and ten chapters corresponding to the eleven questions which, Webb says, contemplation of the Plains suggested to him as a historian. The introductory chapter is in some ways the crux of the book and has become, next to the whole question of geographic determinism, the main point of criticism against the Webb thesis: the attempt to isolate a part of a whole (here a part of the United States—the Great Plains—from the continent) is always the first step in regional studies; unless the region is shown to have a genuine unity or entity the study cannot proceed. Webb's criteria are three: the region is defined by being relatively level, subhumid, and treeless. The second chapter contains an elaboration of the author's introduction. The next two chapters show the successful adaptation of one race, the Plains Indians, and the failure to adapt of the Spanish colonizing culture. The next five chapters (V to IX) cover the American settlement in three stages: early setbacks because of a new and different environment, adaptations which allowed conquest, and institutional adaptations resulting from settlement. These chapters constitute three-fifths of the book. The remaining two chapters show less tangible adaptations in a rough sketch of the literature of the Great Plains, and the final chapter presents a set of seven additional larger questions about the meaning of the Great Plains experience in American life, questions which led to *The Great Frontier*.

Webb discovered the "institutional fault" at the ninety-eighth meridian by recognizing four aspects of the Plains: its indigenous inhabitants (the Plains Indians), lack of timber, level land, and rela-

tive lack of water. Although the conditions varied slightly in the three subregions of the Plains he distinguished, they were all markedly different from the pioneering conditions met by the American settler on the frontier from the coast to the Mississippi. Five technological developments enabled the American to settle the Plains: the six-shooter, the railroad, barbed wire, windmills, and farm machinery; in two phases these altered the human institutions for transporting and controlling stock, and for granting land and water rights. The first phase was the Cattle Kingdom, achieved by the revolver and the railroad; the latter in turn, together with the other three technological developments, swept away the Cattle Kingdom for the second phase, homesteading. Webb does not pursue the thesis up to the Dust Bowl, but that would seem in part to confirm his thesis that man was not using the tools the environment meant him to use, and in part to deny it because in his view the environment seemed powerless to insist that man use the right tools. Webb suggests, the Great Plains themselves summoned the six-shooter into commercial production. But he does agree that time tends to smooth out the "institutional fault."

A further difficulty in reaching a total view of an arbitrarily isolated historical phenomenon is seen in *The Great Plains*, for two activities proceed apace. At the same time that the life in the Great Plains is being analyzed and categorized in the appropriate chapters, an explanation of the historical cause of each aspect of that life is being urged in terms on one total thesis. The antithesis, then, could maintain that there is little effect of environment on institutions and, by piecemeal analysis, assert that what has been proved in selected aspects must be true of all. Webb maintained, however, in 1939 and elsewhere, that he would welcome such a critique; but none has been forthcoming and his thesis is therefore still unchallenged as a working hypothesis, at the very least, of what happened during an

exciting period in American history. Undoubtedly Webb's own Great Plains ancestry and pioneer forebears led him, like Turner, to apply his gifts as a historian in an imaginative recapitulation of the Great Plains experience. While this per-

sonal involvement sometimes makes his writing more assertive than is usual in history textbooks, it is also the quality which continues to attract students and laymen to his work.

THE GREEK PASSION

Type of work: Novel

Author: Nikos Kazantzakis (1885-1957)

Time: c. 1920

Locale: Lycovrissi, Anatolia

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

PRIEST GRIGORIS,

ARCHON PATRIARCHEAS,

OLD LADAS,

CAPTAIN FORTOUNAS, and

HADJI NIKOLIS, the Elders of Lycovrissi

MANOLIOS, the shepherd chosen to portray Christ in the Passion Play

YANNAKOS, the merchant-peddler chosen to portray the Apostle Peter

MICHELIS, the Archon's son, portraying the Apostle John, betrothed to Mariori

MARIORI, the daughter of Priest Grigoris

KOSTANDIS, a café owner, portraying the Apostle James

PANAYOTAROS, nicknamed the Plaster-eater, portraying Judas

KATERINA, a widow, portraying Mary Magdalene

THE AGHA, Lord of Lycovrissi, living for the pleasures of raki and pretty boys

HUSSEIN, the Agha's bodyguard

YOUSOUFAKI, a dimpled, pretty boy, softly sweet and gentle

BRAHIMAKI, the second pretty boy, wild and demanding

OLD MARTHA, the Agha's hunchback slave

LENIO, the handsome, rosy love-child of old Patriarcheas

FOTIS, a priest, the leader of a refugee band

Two world figures as dissimilar as Thomas Mann and Albert Schweitzer spoke up in public praise of Nikos Kazantzakis, the Greek novelist introduced to American readers by *Zorba the Greek* in 1953. One wonders, however, whether their admiration sprang from his earlier picaresque novel, the lively account of a pantheistic and pagan spirit adrift in the modern world, or from the quite different story of savage emotions and primitive religious feeling that he told in *The Greek Passion*. These two novels make it clear that Kazantzakis is capable of widely varied effects in his fiction, though both in their ways create a haunting, poetic

atmosphere and a depth of serious insight into human necessities and motives.

On Easter Tuesday of an unspecified year—the time is apparently about 1920 since there is mention of the Bolshevik Revolution—the Greek elders of Lycovrissi gather to select the principals of the Passion Play given every seven years, at Easter time, under the portico of the church. Lycovrissi is a remote village in the mountains of Anatolia. Its poor, illiterate, superstitious peasants, although they have dim memories of the greatness of their Hellenic past, have lived under harsh Turkish rule for centuries. Only two men in the town know anything

about the outside world. One is Captain Fortounas, a drunken old sailor retired from his rough seafaring life. The other is the Turkish Agha, overlord of the village, a gross, sensual man who spends his days drinking raki and his nights amusing himself with pretty boys.

The elders reveal themselves as an avaricious, corrupt lot as they discuss possible candidates for the Passion Play. Eventually Manolios, a handsome young shepherd betrothed to the archon's illegitimate daughter Lenio, is selected as the Christ; Michelis, the archon's son, as John; Yannakos, a rascally peddler, as Peter; Kostandis, the innkeeper, as James; Panayotaros, a red-bearded, sly man nicknamed Plaster-eater, as Judas, and the widow Katerina, a woman of warm heart and easy virtue, as Mary Magdalene. The principals must be selected a year in advance so that they may prepare themselves for the responsibilities of their roles in re-enacting the story of the Passion and the Crucifixion.

On the same day a party of miserable refugees arrives in the village. Driven from their homes by their Turkish masters, they are sick and starving after their long journey to find a place where they may settle. One ancient man carries the bones of his ancestors on his back. Their leader is an ascetic priest named Fotis, who asks for food for his people and land on which they may build their homes. Many of the villagers are sympathetic, but Priest Grigoris, a selfish, domineering man, wants no religious rival in the neighborhood. Unfeelingly he orders the refugees to move on, and when one woman collapses and dies from hunger he shouts that she has died of cholera in his efforts to arouse the credulous villagers against the refugees.

Manolios, already feeling himself a changed man because he has been chosen to suffer the five wounds and the burden of the cross, persuades Michelis, Yannakos, and others to help the distressed people. Fotis' band is allowed to take ref-

uge in the caves on the summit of Mount Sarakina nearby. Grigoris is enraged when Manolios and Michelis take from the archon's cellar four baskets filled with food to feed the famished women and children. Because Michelis is betrothed to his daughter Mariori, Grigoris claims that the gift is actually a theft of goods that were partly his.

Manolios withdraws to his mountain hut to battle with his weaknesses of the flesh, for he feels that if he is to act the part of Christ he must struggle to become Christlike. Much to her distress, he denies Lenio. When his face breaks out in strange sores he believes that God is punishing him because his dreams at night are filled with visions of Katerina. Lenio, disappointed in her wedding plans, gives herself to Nikolio, a lusty young pagan who is Manolios' assistant in herding the archon's flocks. As the summer passes the other characters in the Passion Play change also and begin to act more in accordance with their roles in the biblical story. Michelis gives up Mariori, defies his father, and eventually goes off to live with Manolios in his retreat. Yannakos foils the scheme of Ladas, the village miser, to cheat the refugees of the few valuables they have left. Kostandis gives them alms. Katerina no longer opens her door to her midnight callers. Panayotaros, eaten by jealousy, plans to revenge himself on Manolios, whom he blames for the widow's new-found virtue.

One morning the Agha's youthful favorite is found dead in his bed. Wild with rage and grief, he arrests the village elders and threatens to hang one man each day until the murderer is discovered. Because of a strange dream he has had, Manolios believes that he must offer himself as a sacrifice and he confesses to the slaying. When another jealous servant of the Agha's household is revealed as the killer, the people of Lycovrissi show no gratitude to the shepherd for his offer to die that other innocent people may be saved. He infuriates Grigoris still more

when he tries to preach a sermon on charity and compassion at the Feast of St. Elijah.

As winter draws on, the plight of Fotis and his band grows more desperate. Manolios, who has been carving the wooden mask of a gentle Christ, carves a new mask of savagery: not the kind, compassionate Christ, but a warrior who came not to bring peace but a sword. It is as a Christ of burning and destruction that Manolios leads the refugees in a raid on Lycovrissi on Christmas Eve. But Panayotaros has already played the part of Judas and the attack fails. Grigoris becomes Caiaphas and the Agha Pontius Pilate to Manolios' Christ. The shepherd dies of his wounds. Fotis and his band begin their wanderings once more.

On the level of symbolism Kazantzakis has kept fairly close the spirit if not the actual events of the New Testament story. His one great departure is the scene of violence which gives the novel its grim climax. Those likely to be shocked should remember that it was the real Christ who in fury scourged the moneylenders from the temple. Perhaps the author implies that in our disordered

world of today there is no real place for a Christ of compassion and love. The Manolios who leads the attack on the village is no longer the meek shepherd he was at the beginning of the novel. Yet the change has been accounted for in the visions that came to him in his solitary retreat. In a dream he had seen Christ descending the mountain, his sad, angry face turned toward Lycovrissi, and carrying a can of petrol instead of a cross.

The Greek Passion is a story of man's desperate, at times despairing, attempt to war with evil in the world about him. The work is well named. It is a fable of mankind's deeply rooted passions for freedom and the survival of the race and for a faith which carries with it the promise of salvation. It is a book of pathos, humor, vulgarity, beauty, and tragedy, a dark and disturbing picture of human striving and failing. Greed and lust struggle with pity and moral justice. And the author's final appeal is to the Christian conscience. These qualities make this a novel to be remembered for a long time because of the truth and strange beauty of its message.

GREENE'S GROATSWORTH OF WIT BOUGHT WITH A MILLION OF REPENTANCE

Type of work: Semi-autobiographical moral tale

Author: Robert Greene (c. 1558-1592)

First published: 1592

Principal characters:

ROBERTO, a scholar, turned playwright and rogue

LUCANIO, his gullible brother

LAMILIA, a courtesan

Little in the narrative of "Greene's Groatworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance" distinguishes it from dozens of other Elizabethan tales of rogues and courtesans. Yet the pamphlet has attracted attention far beyond that merited by its intrinsic literary worth for its comments on the actors and dramatists of Greene's day, and in particular for one

of the earliest allusions to William Shakespeare.

Greene composed the little book in 1592 when he was on his deathbed, cloaking his own misadventures in the story of one Roberto, a scholar who turns to playwriting and to vice. He ends the work with an extensive list of morals to be drawn from his experiences and issues

a special warning "to those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plays."

Greene tells his tale in a plain, unadorned style, showing some of his dramatic skill in the dialogue. He concentrates his attention on only a few significant episodes and summarizes other experiences in a sentence or two. The story opens as Gorinius, an old usurer who lives in a city with strong resemblances to London, addresses his sons from his deathbed. He counsels the younger, Lucanio, his heir, to follow his example and "heap treasure upon treasure" in every way possible, moral or immoral, advising him above all to disregard conscience where profit is involved. He disinherits his older son, Roberto, who had dared to condemn his father and others of his profession for their unscrupulous dealings and leaves him only "an old goat where-with I wish him to buy a goatsworth of wit: for he in my life hath reproved my manner of life, and therefore at my death shall not be contaminated with corrupt gain."

Up to this point the story has followed the stock plot of the good child who prospers in virtue and the evil one who suffers the consequences of sin and folly. But Greene adds a new twist to the tale. Roberto forsakes the path of right when he sees his brother's good fortune, and he devotes all his energies to securing Lucanio's wealth. He gives up his studies and plots with a courtesan, Lamilia, to ensnare his innocent, malleable brother. According to the plan, Roberto is to induce Lucanio to wed Lamilia in return for half the wealth she will gain in the alliance.

Lamilia entertains Lucanio with a seductive song of pleasure and quickly makes an ardent suitor of him. The narrative comes to a temporary halt as the three settle down to dinner together. Roberto proposes to tell a tale about the hazards of love, but Lamilia interrupts him with a fable about a crafty fox who makes a match between a badger and a

ewe. On the eve of the wedding he kills the ewe and escapes, leaving the badger to the mercy of passing shepherds, who believe him guilty of the sheep's death. The connection of Lamilia's fable with the plot is obscure; she concludes by telling Roberto, "Go forward with your tale, seek not by sly insinuation to turn our mirth to sorrow."

Roberto launches into a complicated story about the daughter of an old squire, who chooses from all her suitors a farmer's son and marries him. A young gentleman who wanted her for himself schemes to betray the couple. With the help of an old country woman and her daughter he makes the farmer unfaithful to his bride on their wedding night and wins her for himself. The moral of this tale is "the effects of sudden love."

With these more or less irrelevant episodes concluded, Lamilia and Lucanio settle down to play cards. Lucanio, unsuspecting, inevitably loses large sums to the lady, but his ardor is not dampened. Roberto is the first to suffer, for Lamilia simply laughs at him when he asks for half her winnings. She tells Lucanio enough of their plot to make him cut all ties with Roberto but not enough to spoil her plans for marriage.

Roberto, now penniless, is heard by an actor as he bemoans his fate and curses false women. The prosperous player tells him of the material advantages of working in the theater, describes some of his own successful parts, and suggests that Roberto join his company as a playwright.

As Roberto takes up his new career Lucanio's fortunes plummet. Lamilia takes all his money and his property, then turns him out on the street, penniless, in rags. He works for Roberto for a time, then turns to vice and ends his life as "a notorious Pandar." Greene wastes little time in describing Lucanio's misfortunes; he is primarily concerned with Roberto's fall.

The latter fares little better than his brother. Alternately well-to-do and penni-

less, he becomes expert in all kinds of crimes, regularly cheating his landladies, failing to produce any work for which he is paid in advance, and leaving his virtuous wife to amuse himself with women of the streets. At last he finds himself despised by his acquaintances, ill, and down to that single groat left him by his father. Repenting, he addresses it: "O now it is too late, too late to buy wit with thee: and therefore will I see if I can sell to careless youth what I negligently forgot to buy."

At this point Greene leaves Roberto and draws his own morals, first in a poem on the deceptive pleasures of the world, then in ten rules for virtuous living. He concludes the pamphlet with specific counsel to his playwright friends. His first remarks are addressed to a famous tragedian, probably Christopher Marlowe, who had died an atheist: "Why should thy excellent wit, [God's] gift, be so blinded, that thou shouldst give no glory to the giver?" This man's example must be avoided at all costs.

He next speaks to "young Juvenal, that biting Satirist, that lastly with me together writ a Comedy," warning him to direct his criticism to general faults, not to specific individuals, for the latter course makes bitter enemies. Finally, he warns all his friends against the ingrati-

tude of actors, "those Puppets that spake from our mouths, those Antics garnished in our colors." They have forsaken him and left him to starve; they may do the same thing to his friends.

He is especially bitter about one player, "an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country." The allusion here is certainly to Shakespeare, who was both actor and dramatist and wrote in one of his early plays of a "tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide."

Greene ends his pamphlet by retelling Aesop's fable of the grasshopper and the ant. He is the grasshopper who spends the summer in revelry and starves in winter, while the provident ant feasts on the food he has stored up.

"Greene's Groatworth of Wit" has almost no literary unity; it combines prose and verse, narrative and morality, fiction and personal reminiscence. It is, however, typical of the vast body of rather amorphous pamphlet literature of Elizabethan England, and it is a valuable document for the history of the English drama.

THE GUIDE

Type of work: Novel

Author: R. K. Narayan (1906-)

Time: The present

Locale: Malgudi, India

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

RAILWAY RAJU, a tourist guide, later a swami

MARCO, an Indian art historian

ROSIE, later NALINI, Marco's wife, a dancer

VELAN, Swami Raju's disciple

GAFFUR, a chauffeur and taxi driver

R. K. Narayan is a persistent rather than a highly gifted novelist, a craftsman whose command of the English novel is sufficient for his purposes. One could specify one of his purposes as the creation

in a series of novels of the imaginary town of Malgudi were it not that the town is not as clearly realized on the page as, for example, E. M. Forster's Chandrapore in *A Passage to India*. Narayan

seems to know intimately his locale and characters and sets them in motion with as little explanation as possible. It is probable that his novels would come more vividly to life if one were to know India intimately; on the other hand, the lack of Indian artifacts in the foreground of the action makes it easier simply to see his characters as people like ourselves. This was Narayan's prime intention in embarking on the difficult role of writing Indian novels, in English, but about wholly Indian characters, scenes, customs, and events. In a B.B.C. interview he said he wrote for readers who saw themselves as citizens of Malgudi, the town he created in 1930 to hold the characters of his novels and his short stories.

The Guide is an extended pun or triple allegory based on the title: Raju, the hero, is known as Railway Raju because he develops a large clientele of Indians who arrive at the railway station from the large cities of the subcontinent to be shown the past wonders of Malgudi, the Mempi Peaks, and the sacred Sarayu River. The tourist "guide" of the title, Raju also becomes the swami or holy man of the village and thus the guide to future life, especially during a dreadful drought. Furthermore, in describing the activities of Raju, his mistress Rosie, a low-caste dancing girl, and her husband Marco, an art historian, Narayan gives us a short guided tour of Indian culture, a common ingredient in the Indo-Anglian novel. There is a fourth possible meaning in the title which extends its relevance into that shadowy area Westerners find hard to appreciate: all the characters seem controlled or "guided" by a force other than theirs or the novelist's, as in Raju's slow acquiescence in the unaccustomed role pushed on him by the villagers. The novel may be a philosophic disquisition in a minor key on the whole question of one's "guide" in life, as against the Western notion of one's "goal" in life.

The circular structure of the novel supports such a philosophic construction. Composed of two stories told alongside

each other, it tells of the two lives of Raju. His worldly existence as Railway Raju is told in reminiscences in the first person, first in flashbacks inserted into the first two chapters, then in the whole of chapters three and five; finally he tells the story of his life, from the beginning of his association with Rosie, to the swami's faithful servitor, Velan, during the first night of his twelve-day fast. That story ends with his serving two years in jail for forgery. His entirely different or second life as a swami begins on his release from jail. When he performs an apparent miracle for Velan by reconciling the latter's sister-in-law to the family plans for her marriage—Raju simply temporizes—he becomes the spiritual leader of the village. But after he foolishly entrusts a verbal message for Velan to an idiot cowherd he learns with dismay that the village assumes with gratitude that he has decided to break the drought by fasting to death. He attempts to escape this unexpected spiritual duty by sneaking food and by confessing to Velan the wickedness of his past life. The attempt fails; Velan seems to miss the point that the swami feels unworthy to undertake such a duty. The novel ends ambiguously as the exhausted swami announces that he feels the rains coming and collapses in Velan's arms.

Each story has a "birth" and "death" with the contrast between the lives strongly drawn. Although Raju retains the selfishness and callousness of the entrepreneur in his second life as a swami, in the end the circumstances defeat his own proclivities. When he realizes that being a swami is a way of getting free food from the offerings of the villagers, he postpones making any move from the abandoned temple in which he took refuge when he was released from jail. His mistake, which is also his salvation, occurs while he is trying to hint to Velan that he craves a special dish he doted on as a youth; the message miscarries and the fast replaces the feast he anticipated.

This kind of irony plays over events and people throughout the novel, but

more so in the second story. The history of *Railway Raju* is one of success and failure: the successful establishment of the bookstall and refreshment stand at the railway station and its eventual failure when his guiding takes all his time: he rescues Rosie from Marco after the latter has forbidden her to dance the "Bharat Natyan," or ancient temple dances of India, though he is himself an art historian specializing in friezes and though Rosie descends from a maternal line of temple dancers who have no acknowledged fathers. Raju's success in giving Rosie another name, Nalini, and establishing her as a great dancer collapses for him when he forges her name to a receipt for jewelry and is arrested during her first triumph. While Nalini goes on to greater laurels, Raju goes to jail. All Raju's pre-jail life is described by himself, and the sharp eyes of the guide present a diverting picture of Indian home life, the petit bourgeois business world where he succeeds, and the greater world of politics and administration he almost enters as Rosie's manager.

In the second story of Raju as a swami the comedy becomes ironic. In jail Raju has had time to ponder his abiding question: is he really as worthless as everyone says and as his sentence seems to prove? He succeeds in jail just as he did in life, by being the superintendent's toady or stool pigeon. But this streak of the entrepreneur, his strongest characteristic, leads him to give himself airs as the village swami; he dresses and acts the part, taking refuge in sonorous nothings when pressed for advice. When the villagers mistakenly assume the good swami will fast to break the drought, he is caught in

his finest role. By the fourth day he finds himself undergoing a transformation, begins to pray in earnest, and is apparently a reformed character when he collapses at the end of the novel. The comedy of the shrewd Raju at the mercy of the simple peasants indicates the pervading and growing irony which is the distinctive trait of the book. An earlier instance would be Nalini's decision to abandon Raju when he goes to jail; she walks out of their house carrying only the magnificent volume which Marco has at last published on the cave friezes at the Mempi Peaks. This is the point at which the break between husband and wife occurred and the book ironically expresses the gratitude of the writer for *Railway Raju's* assistance in the writing and production of the work.

The novel is not elaborate in structure and apart from the dialogue, especially that of Gaffur, which is lively, the writing is simple and sometimes clumsy, as when the names Rosie and Nalini are interchanged on a page. What makes the book an enjoyable introduction to the English novel by Indians is the gentle revelation of Raju's shady character somewhere between the more strenuous heroics of Raja Rao or Kamala Markandaya and the more biting irony of Kushwant Singh or Balachandra Rajan. Narayan is earlier on the scene than these post-Independence novelists, and his urbanity is in striking contrast to the peasant novels of the even earlier Mulk Raj Anand. Among stronger talents and clearer voices the charm of Narayan's Malgudi novels may be overlooked unless given their full ironic value.

THE GULL'S HORNBOOK

Type of work: Satirical pamphlet

Author: Thomas Dekker (c. 1570-c. 1641)

First published: 1609

Thomas Dekker, poet, playwright, pamphleteer, and moralist was one of the more prolific writers of the English Ren-

aissance. While several of his plays, particularly *The Shoemakers Holiday*, and several of his lyric poems are still widely

known, his other writings are for the most part unread today. *The Gull's Hornbook* is an exception. This delightfully ironic satire on the young men about town in Dekker's London has always been found to be well worth reading. As a valuable source of information on the customs and manners of the day, not the least interesting aspect of the pamphlet is the view it gives us of the behavior of certain parts of the audience in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater.

While the material of the piece is essentially Dekker's observations and experience, its basic plan, especially in the first chapters, was drawn from the *Grobianus* of Frederick Dedekind (c. 1525-1598). Dedekind was a German who wrote satiric Latin verse and his *Grobianus*, first published on the Continent in two books in 1549, and in revised and enlarged form in three books in 1552, was a popular satire on boorish behavior. The technique of the author was to address the foolish lout Grobianus and advise him, under the guise of giving him advice on elegant behavior, in such a way as to cause him to increase his offensiveness and make him even more of a fool. More popular on the Continent than in England, the book was nevertheless translated by "R. F." into English in 1605 (four years before Dekker's *Hornbook* appeared), under the title *The Schoole of Slovenrie: Or, Cato turnd wrong side outward*. In Dekker's preface "To the Reader" in *The Gull's Hornbook*, we learn that he knew the Latin work and that his book has a "relish of Grobianisme, and tastes very strongly of it in the beginning: the reason thereof is, that, having translated many Bookes of that into English Verse, and not greatly liking the Subject, I altered the Shape, and of a Dutchman fashioned a mere Englishman."

The title of Dekker's work explains its nature: "gull" was an Elizabethan slang term meaning fool or one who may easily be made a fool; and a "hornbook" was a kind of elementary teaching device, usu-

ally a sheet of parchment with the alphabet written on it and mounted on a small board with a handle so that a child could hold it before him; the parchment was protected by a thin, transparent sheet of horn. The hornbook, then, was a child's primer, and *The Gull's Hornbook* is Dekker's primer for fools, in this case fops and gallants.

The book is made up of a prologue and eight short chapters. In the prologue, after announcing that "I sing (like the cuckoo in June) to be laught at," Dekker rushes on to insult "you that have authority under the broad seale of mouldy custom to be called the 'gentle audience.'" He points out that those who read his book are fools with no claim to critical judgment, and he announces he cannot be touched by their scorn. Further, he is determined to sing his cuckoo song to them whether they like it or not: "I will saile boldly and desperately alongst the shore of the Isle of Guls; and in defiance of those terrible blockhouses . . . make true discovery of their wild (yet habitable) Country." His position established, Dekker ends the prologue with a wild invocation to his "courageous muse"; and to Simplicity who was "first, fairest, and chiefest chamber-maide that our great-granddame Eve entertained into service"; Silvanus, who first taught "Carters to weare hob-nailes"; Bacchus and his "moist mystery"; Comus, clerk of "Gluttonies kitchen"; Tobacco, "setter-up of rotten-lunged chimneysweepers"; and Rusticity, "Schoolmistres of fooles."

Chapter One is actually a continuation of the prologue, in which Dekker identifies his point of departure: "Good cloathes are the embroidered trappings of pride, and good cheere the very *eringo-roote* of gluttony." Praising the fig leaf simplicity of dress in Adam's time, Dekker declares that "Fashions then was counted a disease, and horses died of it." As for the "diet of that *Saturnian* age, it was like their attire, homely." But in this age he found diet rich, vast, and corrupt. The breath of the age "stinks like the

mouthes of chambermaids of feeding on so many sweet meats." Dekker claims that while purging the world will be a labor more difficult than the cleansing of Augeas' stable, he is the "madcap that will do it." "Draw neere, therefore," he says, "all you that love to walk upon single and simple soules," and learn from me.

In Chapter Two he lays down his first rule for those who wish to be gallants and actors on the stage of the world: stay in the largest and softest bed until noon, sleep until you hear your belly grumble. Be warned about physicians who recommend less sleep; they want to tire you so that you will fall ill and be forced to pay their fees. Sleep is a wonderful thing shared by emperor and beggar, and, among other things it makes us thrifty: we save the cost of breakfast and we don't wear out our clothes. When you wake, be bad tempered and speak to no one; loll about in bed awhile; and then walk about in your room naked for a time. Nakedness is man's best and natural state. Therefore, when you go out, put on no clothes at all, or put them on carelessly: one is more free when his clothes hang loose. "What man would not gladly see a beautifull woman naked . . . and even highly lift her up for being so? Shall wee then abhorre that in our selves, which we admire and hold to be so excellent in others?"

But problems may arise, points out the author in Chapter Three. The day may be cold. If so, jump from bed, seize your clothes in your arms, and rush into the chimney room and push your way through the crowd about the fireplace so that you may toast yourself to a sweat before you dress. Since this is done for the sake of your health and life, you may safely boast that you live by the sweat of your brow. When you do dress, wear your clothing in such a way that all men will point at you and, thus, make you famous. Also, let your hair grow thick and bushy "lest those sixe-footed creatures that breede in it, and are Tenants to that

crowne-land of thine, bee hunted to death by every base barbarous Barber; and so that delicate, and tickling pleasure of scratching, be utterly taken from thee." Further, "Long haire will make thee look dreadfully to thine enemies, and manly to thy friends. It is, in peace, an ornament; in warre, a strong helmet. It blunts the edge of a sword, and deads the leaden thump of a bullet. In winter, it is a warme night-cap; in sommer, a cooling fan of feathers."

After discussing what is required of the proper gallant when he walks abroad in public in Paul's Walks (Chapter Four), and how he should behave in an inn at dinner (Chapter Five), Dekker gives us a detailed description of how he should conduct himself at a playhouse (Chapter Six). "The theatre is your Poets Royal Exchange, upon which their *Muses*, (yt are now turnd to Merchants,) meeting, barter away that light commodity of words for a lighter ware then words, *Plaudites*. . . . *Plaiers* are their *Factors*, who put away the stuffe, and make the best of it they possibly can (as indeed tis their parts so to doe)." The theater is the place where all kinds and classes of men gather; therefore, it is the best place for the gallant to be seen. On entering, he should walk up and sit on the stage itself where he may arrange himself to show off his clothes and elegant figure, and where he may direct and comment aloud on scenes and the development of the play. Everyone in the theater will look at him and his name will be on everyone's lips: this is fame. "It shall crowne you with rich commendation, to laugh alowd in the midst of the most serious and saddest scenes of the terriblest Tragedy, and to let that clapper (your tongue) be tost so high, that all the house may ring of it . . . for by talking and laughing (like a ploughman in a Morris) you heap *Pelion* upon *Ossa*, glory upon glory. As first, all the eyes in the galleries will leave walking after the Players, and onely follow you: the simplest dolt in the house snatches up your

name, and, when he meetes you in the streetes, or that you fall into his hands in the middle of a Watch, his word shall be taken for you: heele cry 'Hees such a gallant,' and you passe." The gallant should arrive at the theater in great and loud style and should take his place on the stage only when the play is about to begin. "Before the Play begins, fall to cardes . . . throw the cards (having first torne foure of five of them) round about the Stage, just upon the third sound [of the trumpet announcing the prologue], as though you had lost." And if the poet is a fellow who has epigrammed the gallant or flirted with his mistress, he should stand up in the middle of the play, yawning; greet all his acquaintances aloud, and lead as many as he can off the stage, and be gone.

After the play, the gallant should go to the tavern (Chapter Seven). Having selected the most fashionable place, he

should go there and become familiar with the staff, calling all by their first names. He need not worry about money, but put on a good show. Finally, as the gallant's day ends and he leaves the tavern, he should beware of the watch (Chapter Eight). If he is too poor to afford serving men, he should cry aloud in anger, every time he meets someone in the street, that his servants have abandoned him, or else hire one of the tavern boys to light him home. If he should run into the watch, have the boy address him as "Sir," and if the watch accosts him, the gallant should answer their challenge with a jest that they may think him of a proud and aggressive spirit and fear to arrest him; or better, pretend that he is a Dutchman or a Frenchman and cannot understand their language. If the gallant lives far from the tavern, he should spend the night with his mistress and lie to her about money.

HADRIAN'S MEMOIRS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Marguerite Yourcenar (1903-)

Time: 76-138

Locale: Hispania Baetica, now modern Spain, Syria, Gaul, Germany, Britain, Greece, Mauretania, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and Rome

First published: 1951

Principal characters:

HADRIAN, Emperor of the Roman Empire and narrator

ULPIUS TRAJANUS, his uncle, later Emperor Trajan

ANTINOÛS, a handsome Bithynian youth, Hadrian's favorite

SIMON BAR KOKBA, leader of the Jewish revolt

MARCUS AURELIUS, Hadrian's adopted grandson and successor

Hadrian's Memoirs is a work of sound scholarship and unusual imaginative reconstruction. Not the least of the appeals which this novel holds for the modern reader is the light it throws on two of the great problems of our own time—the nature of man and the uses of power. Here these matters are presented as they shaped themselves in the experience of one man. The fact that this man was also a ruler of absolute power is only incidental to the total picture presented. Hadrian was also like the modern man in the con-

traditions and complexities of his character, and the novel is as much a study of ethical motivations as it is the story of a life. Some readers, in fact, may be baffled by the slight attention paid to purely biographical detail. For this reason it should be kept in mind that the novel is intended to be both a memoir and an apology. Supposed to have been written in his last days when Hadrian, resigned to the prospect of death, felt himself exhausted by the responsibilities of his office, these memoirs take the form of a

long letter addressed to his adopted grandson, the seventeen-year-old Marcus Aurelius. Under the circumstances it is only natural that the work should be philosophical in tone and much concerned with ideas of history, death, and immortality.

The public events of Hadrian's life can be briefly summarized. He was born in A.D. 76 in Hispania Baetica, in what is now modern Spain. His family was provincial, and though it had important connections in the greater Roman world there was no prospect that the boy would ever wear the imperial purple. About the year 86 he was placed under the guardianship of his uncle, Ulpius Trajanus, the general who later became the Emperor Trajan. It was Hadrian who, according to this account, carried to Trajan the news that he had been proclaimed by the legions. As the nephew of the emperor, he served in many of the campaigns on the outskirts of the Empire. Whether Trajan ever did adopt him formally as his heir remains somewhat clouded. Trajan's wife supported his cause, however, and a will was produced after Trajan's death. Hadrian, who had been in command of the Roman armies in Syria, succeeded his uncle in 117.

His first acts were to renounce Trajan's costly program of conquest and to consolidate the imperial powers at home. Abandoning completely the attempt to subjugate the Parthians, he made the Euphrates the eastern border of the Empire. His policy of stern but just Roman peace extended also to the wild Germanic tribes. In 119 he began his progress through Gaul, Germany, Spain, Britain, Greece, Mauretania, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and Egypt. In Britain he ordered construction of the wall that bears his name, intended to keep the savage Picts north of the Solway. Returning to Rome in 131, and saddened by the death of his beloved Antinoüs, he issued a year later the *Edictum perpetuum* on which Justinian subsequently based his *Corpus juris*. In the same year the Jews, led by Simon Bar

Kokba, revolted in protest against the establishment of a permanent Roman colony at Jerusalem and the dedication of a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of the Hebrew Temple. This revolt Hadrian put down with the utmost severity, and with the defeat of Simon Bar Kokba in 135 the eighteen hundred years of the Jewish dispersion began. On the whole, however, Hadrian was a wise and humane ruler who reduced taxes, alleviated the hardships of the slave class, and completed tremendous building programs in Athens and Rome. A patron of the arts, he was also a poet of some distinction whose best-known work is the appealing lyric beginning, "Animula, vagula, blandula. . . ." He died at his villa at Baiae in 138.

Most of these incidents figure in the background of Mme. Yourcenar's novel, but usually it is not the event which is most important for her purpose but its significance to Hadrian's way of thinking and feeling. It is in the delicate handling of this material and the shift from outward circumstance to inward meaning that the novelist's achievement becomes apparent. It must also be kept in mind that she is dealing with a non-Christian milieu. To show Hadrian and his age from the modern viewpoint would strike a false note at the start; consequently, for purposes of morality as well as of art, she allows Hadrian to explain himself. The result is a study which is probably as close as any modern writer can ever get in presenting the pagan mind in a period before the concepts of a gap between body and soul, between the physical universe and eternal reality, became historical fact.

This aspect of the novel is more clearly revealed in the account of Hadrian's relations with Antinoüs, the handsome Bithynian youth who became his favorite. When the emperor's beloved was drowned in the Nile—the suggestion is that he committed suicide—during a trip to Egypt in 130, Hadrian was for a time inconsolable. Later he established a cult

to deify the young man, built cities in his honor, and commissioned the statues which in many art museums today are still regarded as the symbols of immortal youthful beauty. There is no question of modern morality in the relationship existing between emperor and favorite, only a pagan delight in the beauty of the human form. Hadrian's attitude, though we would nowadays call it abnormal, reflects more than the perversions many of his contemporaries practiced because they were fashionable. In his view all pleasures enjoyed with art seemed chaste.

Another instance of Mme. Yourcenar's skillful handling is to be found in the story of Simon Bar Kokba's revolt. There was no idea of religious domination in Hadrian's decision to dedicate a shrine to Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of the Hebrew Temple; there was room in the Roman pantheon for the gods of all peoples, and the Romans were as willing to accept Jehovah within their religious framework as they had received, often through returning veterans, the gods of Egypt and other outposts of the Empire. Hadrian's act was really intended to symbolize the solidarity of the state, the principle of empire and the stabilizing influence of a culture and a civilization. But the Jews, although able to accept the idea of Roman citizenship and law, could not accept Jupiter as the symbol of unity because he stood for a different faith. It may be that Hadrian's moment of recoil when he was presented with Simon Bar Kokba's severed head marks the actual

beginning of modern history, for the Jewish revolt signified the concept of passionate rejection which we find in all protests against systematized authority, whether in religion, in politics, or in science.

These are only two of the incidents which provide dying Hadrian with material for philosophical speculation. The approach of death, which first leads him to recall events and personalities of the past and to savor in recollection the sensations of experience, becomes in the end an attempt at self-understanding, an effort to penetrate his contradictions of sensualism and rationalism, of discipline and license, of philosophical detachment and emotional involvement, in order to see clearly the nature of man as reflected in himself. His speculations were directed toward a single and worthy end: to confront death with open eyes.

Mme. Yourcenar plays fair with her readers. In an appended Author's Note she lists her sources, tells where and why she has taken minor liberties with chronology or characters, and explains certain interpretations justified by the vagueness of actual history. Her own honesty and clarity of motive argue much for her portrait of a man and an age presented in this contemplative, intuitive, and beautifully styled historical novel. This is a work of fiction in which all details are relevant and everything is in proportion. A spirit of Roman gravity and serenity is apparent on every page.

HAMPSHIRE DAYS

Type of work: Nature study

Author: William Henry Hudson (1841-1922)

First published: 1903

Despite the poverty and ill health from which W. H. Hudson suffered much of his life, the dominant mood of *Hampshire Days* is the quiet joy found in the creatures, plants, and seasons of nature. This mood may have been furthered by

the Civil List pension granted the author in 1901, the year before he finished the work. He tells us that he returned to New Forest in December, 1902, to complete this book, which chronicles his activities and discoveries in Hampshire

from 1900 to 1902. His purpose was to write of this "delectable spot in the best bird months of April, May, and June," but fortunately his vision included more than these months and a far wider variety of subjects, including Hampshire people, towns, and buildings, than this statement indicates.

Because Hudson was an important naturalist, one would expect much of the book to be devoted to the flora and fauna of Hampshire and its centuries-old forests, like Harewood, Wolmer and, especially, the somewhat misleadingly named New Forest. Hudson reveals his love of this particular forest on many pages and on one occasion speaks of it as containing the most beautiful forest landscape in all England. Its name derives from its being placed under forest laws by William the Conqueror in 1079. Of its present-day 130-square-mile area, thirty square miles are privately owned and forty-five of the remaining hundred are Crown woodlands, largely of oak and pine. Hudson lived in a former manor house in the forest while gathering material for his book. He was obviously concerned about the future of the forest, endangered by the abuse of the New Forest. This abuse was the unregulated raiding of the forest of its heath, game animals, rare species of birds, and plants. Hudson believed that only by government ownership of these lands and by careful regulation could New Forest be restored to its former glory.

Hudson's interest in plant life is further revealed by his discussion of yew trees, particularly the Selborne yew, whose age he believed to exceed greatly the thousand years usually credited to a large churchyard yew, and the Farrington yew, both of which he numbers among his Hampshire favorites. He postulates that the practice of burying people beneath yews (with the consequent removal of a barrowful of roots for each grave) inflicts injury on the yew, and he concludes that the great size of the Selborne yew may result from the fact that

only one grave was dug near it. As a naturalist, Hudson properly preferred wild nature to cultivated or garden nature, and he had little use for collectors of plants or animals if they killed in order to collect. He seems to have had little use for cut flowers; a picked rose, he says, lacks luster and means no more to the soul than a flower made from wax or paper. But roses growing wild convince one that there is no more beautiful sight in all the world.

The bulk of the book concerns such small creatures as birds, small mammals, and snakes. Hudson did not intend to present any very startling discoveries, but to reveal what he had learned about these animals of Hampshire: their mating habits, peculiarities of behavior, and some of the tales told of them. He discusses the mating game of several animals, as, for instance, the unusual behavior of the female *viridissima* (a variety of grasshopper) who, hypnotically drawn to the singing of the males, selects the one she wants and waits "to be taken in marriage." In the case of the white spider, however, the male is both irresistibly drawn to the somewhat larger, white female and at the same time made fearful by her poisonous fangs. Consequently, first he advances eagerly, only to be made wary, and then retreats.

Hudson had the naturalist's desire to test the truth of accepted nature tales, as his meticulous account of the cuckoo in the robin's nest shows. In order to verify the newly hatched cuckoo's supposed strength, he watched the developments in a nest containing, originally, three robin's eggs and one cuckoo egg. In time two of the robin eggs were ejected, one definitely by the cuckoo, as Hudson saw, but the cuckoo went even further. As Hudson watched, the preternaturally strong fledgling pushed a baby robin from the nest. In all his discussions of animal behavior he reveals the qualities shown here: the care in observation, the desire to test accepted ideas, and the obvious relish he took in reporting his findings.

Despite Hudson's obvious concern for plants and animals, his book also deals with man and his works. In fact, he devotes some chapters to these topics and only rarely is man totally absent from his discussions. He is careful to acknowledge his debt both to such earlier naturalists as Gilbert White and Moses Harris and to men of his own day who provided him with facts and stories. Of the chapters devoted to man, one deals with the Selborne atmosphere and discusses the appearance of the people, the scenery, and other aspects of the town. Another, devoted to the Hampshire people divides the inhabitants of this region into four types: the blond, which greatly outnumbered all others; the Saxon, also light-haired with blue eyes, but heavier; those slight and narrow-headed, with brown skins, crow-black hair, and dark eyes; and those of average height, with oval faces and dark eyes and hair.

Hudson's concern for man and his ways is also seen in his interest in old folks and their stories of the past. In one instance, an old woman was able to explain how the lone grave beneath the great yew at Selborne came there; in another, an old woman told of the dashing career of her father, a horn-blower for the

"Selborne mob" that attacked a poor-house in a time of poverty. Such tales of the past were much to Hudson's liking; he gives them prominent places in this book.

Hampshire Days is the work of a many-sided man: both Hudson the naturalist and Hudson the student of human nature are clearly visible. The personality that informs the work is that of a keen-minded inquirer, capable of delighting himself in study but also capable of feeling compassion for both men and animals. Even though he seems to dislike the intrusions of man into nature's haunts, he has kind words for some of the young people he meets during his outings. And even though he delivers a lecture in Chapter One about the undesirability of such interference with nature as saving one of the robins ejected from its nest by the cuckoo, and the necessity of the death of great numbers of young birds each year, Hudson himself is guilty of such "interference." When a young blackbird shows itself incapable of getting food, Hudson intervenes. His explanation is that although he may dislike playing at providence among nature's creatures, he cannot free himself of pity.

HENDERSON THE RAIN KING

Type of work: Novel

Author: Saul Bellow (1915-)

Time: The present

Locale: Central East Africa

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

EUGENE HENDERSON, an American millionaire, a traveler in Africa, a philosophical clown

ROMILAYU, his native guide and companion

WILLATALE, the queen of the Arnewi tribe

MTALBA, her sister

ITELO, the prince-champion of the Arnewi

DAHFU, chief of the Wariri tribe

HORKO, the king's uncle

THE BUNAM, the chief priest of the Wariri

GMILO, a lion superstitiously believed to contain the spirit of Dahfu's father

ATTI, a lioness

DAHFU, her cub, as named by Henderson

Although the forms and techniques of fiction seem capable of almost endless variation, most novelists have only one main story to tell, and the fortunate writer is the one who finds his major theme and fable early in his career. Saul Bellow did in his first novel, *Dangling Man*. It is the quest, man's search for freedom and rest within the fretted human spirit.

For this reason *Henderson the Rain King* is a Messianic novel, like *The Plumed Serpent* or *A Fable*. The pattern it follows—the outsider in search of the truth which a local African Messiah reveals to him—is as old as Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas: Prince of Abyssinia*. The theme is the achieving of individual identity, of becoming turning into being. For a man thus to learn the depths of his own nature Bellow constructs a situation that verges on the fantastic: a middle-aged American millionaire becomes the chief priest of the rain goddess of a tribe in a totally isolated region somewhere in East Africa. The identification of the tribe is impossible, the geography is unplaceable, the realities of travel are ignored. The narrator uses a coarse but effective style; he is what is technically called an "unreliable narrator" who must reveal his character, even when he does not know his identity, in the earlier chapters; the redeemed must act as if he were unredeemed in telling of the events up to his redemption. Unlike *Great Expectations*, for example, in which Pip tells us all after the close of the action, the narrator employs a continuous past tense so that the narration and the action parallel each other. Thus neither he nor the reader is ever in advance of the final revelation.

But the seeker in Bellow's fiction is no Ulysses, Hamlet, Don Quixote, Gulliver, Huck Finn, or Ishmael. He is the philosophical clown, the innocent American and adventurous discoverer of a spiritual quest which begins with the knowledge that "man's character is his fate" and ends with the realization that "man's fate

is his character." He is the *schnorrer* Joseph in *Dangling Man*, Asa Leventhal in *The Victim*, and Augie in *The Adventures of Augie March*, that free-swinging, irreverent, passionate account of one man's journey on two continents, through the depression years and a world war, and within the geography of his own soul. All of Bellow's heroes are driven by their desires toward some goal where the beginning of wisdom is often indistinguishable from error and folly. Eugene Henderson, the narrator and central figure of *Henderson the Rain King*, is no exception. In fact, he is the most frantic and grotesque of Bellow's creations.

He is, to begin with, a tremendously comic figure, oversized in physique, great in his appetites, obsessed by the demands of an *I want, I want* that clamors without appeasement within him. He is fifty-five years old when we first meet him. A man with a temper as violent as his physical force, he has more money than even his eccentric needs demand, a second wife, an assorted brood of children. He has turned his home into a pig farm, learned to play the violin, and acquired a reputation for drinking and crude manners. When he tries to sum up his life, it is, as he says, a mess, a fact he realizes acutely without knowing why.

When he can no longer face himself, his family, or his past, he flees to Africa with dreams of becoming another Dr. Grenville or Dr. Schweitzer. Africa, as Henderson sees it, is an empty and secret land, the last outpost of the pre-human past, a land unmarked by the footprints of history.

With a native guide, Romilayu, he arrives at last in the land of the Arnewi, where he engages in a ritual wrestling bout with Itelo, the champion of the tribe. But in that remote place he still cannot escape his past; he remains a millionaire, a wanderer, a violent man looking for peace and happiness. The queen of these gentle people tells him that his malady is the *grun-tu-molani*, the will to live instead of dying. Accepted by the

Arnewi and courted by the queen's sister, Mtalba, Henderson plans to cleanse the tribe's sacred cistern, which is infested with frogs. But his homemade bomb blasts away the wall of the cistern and the water seeps into the parched earth. Rather than face the consequences of this disaster he runs away.

Henderson next turns up among the Wariri, a more warlike and savage tribe. The king is Dahfu, a ruler considerably more enlightened than his subjects, for he has studied in a missionary school and can speak to Henderson in English. While watching a tribal festival, Henderson is moved to lift the statue of Mum-mah, goddess of clouds, after several of the Wariri have failed to budge the massive idol. His act of strength, he soon discovers, is sacramental. When a sudden downpour follows, he is acclaimed as the new Sungo, or rain king, of the tribe, and he is compelled to put on the green silk drawers of his office. But Henderson, elevated to a post in which he becomes a scapegoat for the capricious rain goddess, is no better off than he was before; he is as much governed by ritual as King Dahfu, who will rule only as long as his powers of procreation last. When they fail, he will be strangled and another ruler will be selected.

In the end, Dahfu is the means of Henderson's salvation. In an underground pit he keeps a pet lion, Atti, a creature hated and feared by the Wariri because they believe the beast has bewitched their king. As Dahfu continues to postpone the ritual capture of the wild lion supposed to contain his father's spirit, the chief priest and the king's uncle plot against him. Under Dahfu's tutelage, meanwhile, Henderson learns to romp with the lion and imitate its roars. Dahfu tells him to act the lion's role, to be a beast. Recovery of Henderson's humanity will come later; meanwhile, he is to imitate the lion.

Dahfu's lion cult impresses Henderson. His failure has been his bullish or piggish attempt to alter the world around him, to

kick back when he felt kicked by fate. Instead he must alter himself, and in particular cure himself of fear by thinking like a lion, by imagining the lion at the cortex of his brain and making himself over as a lion. In spite of his crushing failure with the Arnewi he has learned two things that help him in his daily lion lessons. First, although a man when struck is likely to strike out in revenge (as the Wariri but not the Arnewi do,) pure virtue can break the chain of blows. The Arnewi, principally Mtalba, the aunt of Prince Itelo who was once the companion of Dahfu, are virtuous but cowl-like because they love their cows; hence their virtue is not for Henderson. Second, he has been confirmed in a sneaking sense of his own worth by Mtalba, who oozed the odor of sanctity and was prepared to marry him. The demanding voice of the *I want, I want* within Henderson becomes the roar of the lion as Dahfu instructs him that man is still animal, but that it is possible for him to be a lion and not a pig.

The king's final lesson is that of courage in meeting death, which Henderson has always thought the biggest problem of all. When Dahfu is killed, possibly through the chief priest's conniving, while trying to capture a wild lion, Henderson flees the Wariri to avoid becoming the next king, and he returns with a captured lion cub to America. We get our last glimpse of him at the airport in Newfoundland. He is playing with a little boy, the child of American parents but who speaks only Persian. Dahfu and his lion have done their work. Henderson's spirit is finally at home in the animal housing of his flesh.

No brief outline of Henderson's story can ever adequately convey the gusty, wild humor, sensuous brilliance, abundant sense of life, or stylistic vigor of Saul Bellow's novel. Nor is it profitable to discuss the allegorical or symbolic meanings it contains, for those are matters that each reader must discover for himself. Call the novel whatever one will—a wild bur-

lesque on all the travel books ever written, a comic extravaganza on modern themes, a melodramatic adventure story, a fantasy, an allegory, or the narrative of a symbolic journey into the dark reaches of the soul—*Henderson the Rain King*

allows every reader to find a moment of truth. It is not always the same truth because readers look in different directions, but it is some revelation of the comedy and the tragedy of being. We cannot demand more of any novelist.

A HERITAGE AND ITS HISTORY

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892-)

Time: Late Victorian period

Locale: England

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

SIR EDWIN CHALLONER, the lord of the mansion

HAMISH CHALLONER, his younger brother

JULIA CHALLONER, Hamish's wife

SIMON SHALLONER, their older son, Sir Edwin's heir

WALTER CHALLONER, Simon's younger brother

RHODA GRAHAM CHALLONER, Sir Edwin's wife, Simon's mistress

HAMISH, the son of Rhoda and Simon

FANNY GRAHAM CHALLONER, Simon's wife and Rhoda's sister

RALPH,

NAOMI,

GRAHAM,

CLAUDE, and

EMMA, the children of Simon and Fanny

MARCIA CHALLONER, the wife of young Hamish Challoner

DEAKIN, the butler who resembles a Greek chorus in his comments on the novel's events and on life generally

In a sense, *A Heritage and Its History*, because it encompasses more time than any other novel by Ivy Compton-Burnett, is the most representative of all her novels, though it is not quite her best. The heritage, as Miss Compton-Burnett's readers and those who have studied their ancestors' lives will recognize, is the complex genetic and social inheritance of what we call good and evil tendencies. It is the virtues and the sins of the fathers that are visited upon all generations since; though we live in our own day, what we do has been done by all our forebears, as Rhoda and Sir Edwin say and as parts of the Bible imply. In its encompassment of universalized and eternalized human activity in three generations, as in its inclusion of the wise butler and the excessively precocious children as commentators upon the sensational and

usual events the dialogue of the novel advances, *A Heritage and Its History* is Miss Compton-Burnett at her most representative. Because in presenting more characters and times than usual, she leaves even the alert reader occasionally baffled, the novel, though excellent, is inferior to its immediate predecessor, *A Father and His Fate* and its two successors, *The Mighty and Their Fall* and *A God and His Gifts*.

It is not, as indeed it is not usually, of the utmost importance to give the intriguing complexity of the plot, which as someone once said of another of her novels, combines complexities that might have arisen had Sardou and Sophocles collaborated. Of course things are not what they seem. The apparently healthy Sir Edwin precedes in death his dying brother. The proper son of Hamish, Si-

mon, has children by both the Graham sister he marries and the older one he does not, and he becomes at the close of the novel, Sir Simon. The erratic son, Walter, who did not finish Oxford and who is a poet, leads a proper life. Behind the scenes, as in the Greek tragedies it resembles and, like them, interrupted by comic and satirical interludes, events of plausible sensationalism occur: sudden death, adultery, near incest, a conflict of parents and children, of brother and brother. The story is, in other words, the stuff of human nature told factually and palatably and wittily and bearably, as it is in all but the first of Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels, the stuff of human nature in action.

Under its Victorian trappings *A Heritage and Its History* retells the ancient dynastic story of the cuckolded king, the dispossessed heir, and usurper; but in this case the heir, Simon Challoner, brings about his own undoing. All of the Challoners live in a large family house over which Sir Edwin Challoner, a bachelor, presides. For years, however, the job of running the estate has been entrusted to his younger brother Hamish. Julia, Hamish's wife, has been the mistress of the household ever since her marriage, and Simon, her older son, is Sir Edwin's heir. Because his uncle is over sixty, Simon seems unlikely to have a long wait before he comes into his expectations. Walter, the younger son is an impractical, frustrated poet. Then Hamish Challoner dies. Sir Edwin, lonely after his brother's death, marries Rhoda Graham, a young neighbor less than half his age. Because of his uncle's advanced years, there is no chance that Simon's prospects will be changed by this marriage. Then Simon, ironically, cuts himself off from his inheritance by fathering a child on Rhoda. To avoid scandal, Sir Edwin claims Hamish as his son and heir after swearing Simon and Walter to secrecy.

Forced to yield his place to his own son, Simon marries Fanny, Rhoda's sister, and Julia goes to live with them in the small house which had belonged to

Rhoda and Fanny. Simon continues to help his uncle in administering the estate, but as the years pass and his family grows he becomes more and more a disappointed, embittered man. By the time his sons and daughter are grown he has driven them almost to distraction—certainly to the point of detesting him—by complaining gloomily that his family lives only one step away from the workhouse.

But guilt concealed cannot remain hidden. The secret of Hamish's birth must be revealed to all when he falls in love with Simon's daughter Naomi and the young people tell their parents of their desire to marry. Simon accepts the burden of the story that must be told.

This family situation is further complicated when Hamish marries Marcia after Sir Edwin's death at the age of ninety-four. He dies childless, however, and the estate and title pass to Simon. At the end his children are discussing his change of fortunes. Is he actually noble or merely deceiving himself and the others? A combination of both is the answer.

Counterpointing the Challoners in this grim comedy of possession and dispossession is the figure of Deakin, the butler. His true loyalty is not to the different masters and mistresses he serves but to the house itself, which is a symbol of history, of life in the stream of time. The others are like the creeping vine that grows outside the house, shadowing the rooms within; if they were to be exposed to the light they would be startled.

The plot is not the main thing, but merely an unfolding of events that carries forward the revelation of life the characters enact or put in action. The characters are not the main thing, either, in the individualized sense in which they would be in a novel by William Faulkner or Joyce Cary. Here, as in many of Miss Compton-Burnett's novels, it would be possible to transpose some of the characters without causing the reader, unless he is constantly alert, to notice the difference. This statement does not mean that Miss Compton-

Burnett's characters are distinguishable types any more than Hemingway's early characters, who were clarified almost exclusively by dialogue. It does mean that they represent all kinds of people in whom the likeness to ourselves and to the friends we know deeply is more marked than individuality.

Aesthetically speaking, the dialogue is the point at which, more in each novel it seems, Miss Compton-Burnett's originality manifests itself most clearly. As in Congreve and Etherege and Hemingway and Henry Green, to cite disparate aesthetic cousins, the dialogue is the thing wherein the consciousness of the human predicament and how it may be endured, sometimes with joy, sometimes with anguish, is forwarded and revealed. It is bared to the essential bone, increasingly without conventional props. The characters, never identified by more than a few sentences of description and their age, speak it condensedly and wittily. If the reader is not the co-operator in the aesthetic enterprise Miss Compton-Burnett expects, alert as if it were poetry he is reading, he is likely to miss the plot, lost in a mesh of unidentified time and characters unknown. If he attends well, his reward is the aesthetic delight the most harrowing events, well-told, bring.

What occurs in *A Heritage and Its History* is united in tone by the controlled chorus of butler and children, all of whom keep us aware, as Deakin the butler puts it, that life is not adapted to us and that it is up to us to conform as cheerfully as we can to its conditions if we are permitted to know them. To know all that the main characters and the commenting choruses say about themselves and others is to understand and forgive the facts of human nature as Miss Compton-Burnett recognizes them.

This divine lack of reproof—even more apparent in *The Mighty and Their Fall* and *A God and His Fate*—has been increasing ever since Miss Compton-Burnett published *Mr. Bullivant and His Lambs* in 1947. Evidently this development has burgeoned from both a growing reconciliation to the worst that may happen to all of us and a slight brightening of her world-view, so that it now approaches what may be called cheerful stoicism or uncritical, nearly omniscient, factualism. All her novels deserve attention, the earliest for what they expose, the latest for what they show of how we may dispose ourselves before what must be exposed. "If way to the Better there be," Thomas Hardy said, "it exacts a full look at the Worst." The early novels show the worst. The later suggest, with diffident hopefulness and no lack of clarity about the Worst we must face, how we may best aim towards the Better.

The kind, hard look the novels give on life and death and her unusual technique that requires a co-operative reader rather than one accustomed to the pap-feeding of popular fiction, has kept Miss Compton-Burnett from popularity in the United States. To a lesser extent this has been true of the public even in England, where she has been honored by royalty, critics, and the awarders of prizes. Not to read Ivy Compton-Burnett is to deprive oneself of a depth of vision comparable with what one finds in Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and other writers we agree to call great. Not to read her is to deprive oneself of pleasure also, for Miss Compton-Burnett's somewhat hopeful stoicism is always leavened by humor and wit. In her work style and wisdom, within the necessary human limit of fallibility, conjoin beautifully to delight.

HEROIDES

Type of work: Letters in verse

Author: Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 B.C.-A.D. 18)

First transcribed: Indefinitely B.C.

In the *Heroides* or *Letters of the Heroines* the Roman poet Ovid composed a series of dramatic letters in elegiac verse (alternating lines of dactylic hexameter and dactylic pentameter). "Elegy," writes one of Ovid's heroines, "is the weeping strain," and the mood of most of these letters is that of sadness. Most of the heroines have been rejected by famous heroes, Dido by Aeneas, Ariadne by Theseus, Hypsipyle by Jason, Oenone by Paris. Some are apprehensive of coming death either for themselves or for their lovers: Canace, Dejanira, Sappho, and Dido are about to commit suicide. Medea is about to kill the new wife of Jason and her own two children. Almost all of the heroines are in hopeless but pitiful situations.

Ovid's heroines are caught at a turning point in their lives, usually when bad is going to worse. But in these turning points there is conflict, both internal and between several people, and we are reminded that Ovid was also a dramatist. (His play, *Medea*, is not extant.) The letters are the ancestors of the familiar dramatic monologues of Robert Browning and also of the interior monologue, as used by Joyce or Dostoevski, since the heroines reveal in their writing their inmost thoughts. Also, what the heroine says usually sets a scene for the reader: she will tell, through reminiscence, the events of the past which led up to her present woe. Sometimes the reader seems to be put in the mind of the heroine, moving rapidly from one of her associations to another, or from a past memory to the present. In telling the different stories dramatically, Ovid remains in the background, almost out of sight.

The *Heroides*, apart from being one source of dramatic and interior monologue, have inspired different generations of English poets, from Chaucer, who felt deep sympathy for Canace, and his contemporary Gower, to John Donne, who imitated several of the letters in his own poetry, and to Alexander Pope, who wrote one of his finest poems, "Eloisa to

Abelard," in imitation of the verse epistles.

Ovid's "Canace to Macareus" is one of the finest short dramatic poems in classic literature. As it opens, Canace is telling her brother and lover Macareus that she has been ordered by their father Aeolus to kill herself as punishment for having a child by her brother. She tells in close detail how she had become pregnant by Macareus, how her sympathetic nurse had tried unsuccessfully to abort her, and finally how the new-born baby had betrayed itself by crying as the nurse was trying to carry it, wrapped in a bundle of sticks, past Aeolus. Aeolus, the household tyrant, paradoxically able to control the four winds but not his own passion, is the inflexible villain of Canace's letter. The reader sympathizes with the incestuous couple, and Ovid succeeds in getting us to question any sort of inflexible legal or moral code.

At best Ovid's heroines appeal to our sympathies; however, a poet can say only so much on the theme of rejected love. Ovid sometimes seems bored with his subject matter, especially when he takes his material from another poet. When he borrows Dido from Vergil, his poem becomes only a good but obvious imitation; and Ovid's "Dido to Aeneas" adds almost no new detail to Vergil's story in the *Aeneid*.

Most modern readers will be bored with the majority of the *Heroides*, for the letters often seem sentimental or mawkish by modern standards of taste; but at the same time today's reader is often caught up by Ovid's power as a storyteller and dramatist, and convinced that many of the characters are "true" or "real." One remembers, for instance, the pictures of the indulgent nurse and of Aeolus, the petty tyrant, in "Canace to Macareus"; the picture of Ariadne lying on the rocks of her island watching Theseus' sails disappear in the distance; and the picture of Paris flirting with Helen at the table of her husband Menelaus. The realism in the *Heroides* is psychological:

what Ovid's characters think and do seems natural today. Also, Ovid writes sympathetically about the social outcast and the mentally sick: he shows understanding for the close to insane Dido and Medea, and for the incestuous Canace and Phaedra.

Ovid's verse is artificial, however, and he makes no effort to give each of his heroines an individual style or poetic voice; all seem to speak in the same way. Still, they retain a psychological individuality, which is shown through their ac-

tions and their thoughts.

Ovid depends on his readers' already knowing his story, and he often builds his poems dramatically on various allusions, so that the modern reader is annoyed by all the unfamiliar names. But in the context of his time Ovid was certainly within his rights in sketching in a character's descent from one of the gods. To make up for what are today obscure allusions, Ovid presents accurate physical detail with vigorous and compelling power.

HISTORY OF FREDERICK II OF PRUSSIA

Type of work: Historical biography

Author: Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

Time: 1712-1786

Locale: Prussia, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Silesia, Moravia, Saxony, and Friesland

First published: 1858-1865

Principal personages:

FREDERICK II, called the GREAT, born Karl Friederich

FREDERICH WILHELM, his father, known as Frederick William I

SOPHIE DOROTHEE OF HANOVER, his mother

WILHELMINA, his older sister

GEORGE II, King of England, his uncle

ELIZABETH CHRISTINA, his wife

FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET DE VOLTAIRE, his literary confidant and mentor

Sometimes called Carlyle's Thirteen Year War with Frederick of Prussia, the six-volume *History of Friederich II of Prussia Called Frederick the Great* is still a controversial masterwork, more talked about than read. Undisputably original, the work departs radically from the Gibbon-Macauley tradition which Carlyle called the Dryasdusts in order to bring back life to a great man, a hero who exercised the divine right of kings with military and diplomatic might to overcome diabolic wrongs. Such was the belief of Carlyle, a historian who found his theory of history explicit in one great man, and who then accommodated history to fit the thesis, a most objectionable practice to most of his critics, but lively and compelling both as literature of power and literature of knowledge, as De Quincey defined them.

Much of the knowledge, however, is outdated because of recent historical discoveries. Also, the historical method is suspect, Carlyle having explained the past in terms of his present and prejudices. Much of the documentation is edited, especially that concerning Voltaire, to the convenience of the historian. In addition, most of the geneology serves only to confuse without advancing the biography. Careful attention and great ingenuity, however, brings Frederick II to life in his setting, especially on the battlefields which Carlyle traversed with such care and understanding.

The power of the book cannot be overstated; the hundred-year test of a classic has been met. The quality of the framing, the immensity of the design and the execution, the ruggedness of style stand idiosyncratic but firm.

The biography of the author under the stress or the compulsion of writing this work is well known: five years of reading, traveling, and writing and rewriting, to bring out the vigorous first two volumes, the slow, tedious job of digesting and disgorging "truckloads of Dryasdusts" of battles and treaties, the neglecting of his fatally ill wife Jane who saw the hand of God in the enterprise, the fact that his conscience bothered him for the rest of his life.

Frederick II, known in history as Frederick the Great, shaped modern Europe almost single-handedly with his own great strength of character, personality, and resolve. To Carlyle, his might did mean right. No hero, however, made a less auspicious start, and in looking backward to the first volume no hero appeared less impressive in his fullest unpretentious dress. He possessed, however, an internal vigor, a sharp gray eye, and a cloak of impenetrability learned well in youth.

The protracted opening of the biography traces the history of the Brandenburg and Hohenzollern families back to the Middle Ages, covering both sides of the inbred family.

Emerging from medieval beginnings, born to a militaristically and cruelly imperative father and a seemingly calm but conniving mother, young Frederick, the fourth in the family of ten, seemed destined to failure as a son and prince. His older sister, Princess Wilhelmina, his protector and confidante throughout life, thought him a "dull" student, probably unwilling to learn by rote and drill, and his father discovered him obstinate. He showed an early interest in music (he called the flute his mistress during his lonely and exiled hours), literature, and good conversation. Officially he was exposed to "mathematics, no Latin," science, and military drill.

Before his majority, he revolted against his father's stern measures and planned to flee to England, but this breach in military discipline brought death to one of the conspirators and Frederick himself

barely escaped execution. Revolting also against religious conformity, he was compelled to acknowledge the doctrine of Predestination and to swear loyalty to his king before being forced to live in semi-retirement, first in Cüstrin, later in Ruppin, where within four years he had redeemed himself in the King's eyes. "That their method of training-up a young soul, to do God's will, and accomplish useful work in this world, does by no means appear to the royal mind an admirable one," Carlyle adds and explains that this episode, though it brought Frederick to stern self-discipline, caused him to draw a curtain of reticence over all important actions later.

Both Wilhelmina and Frederick were pawns in parental matrimonial machinations, but neither of the hoped-for weddings took place. The sister enjoyed her withdrawal to reading and music; her brother studied to become a monarch, at the same time courting famous literary men by correspondence, Voltaire in particular.

Then followed four years of domestic tranquillity, in which the irascible Friedrich Wilhelm had finally to admit "there is much in this Fritz." He married his son to the "Inspidity of Brunswick," as the sharp-tongued Carlyle called Princess Elizabeth Christian, and they lived comfortably in Reinsberg. Apparently this marriage overcame all rumors of the indiscretions of the "foppish" prince. In 1735 he became for some time the virtual ruler during his father's illness.

In 1740 the young king took over a peaceful kingdom into which he brought culture, and Voltaire, for a brief respite. From the three-fold conquest of Silesia to the partition of Poland, King Frederick did not falter in his firm resolve to create, or re-create, an Empire, never holy, and certainly not Roman. The latter three volumes are history: accounts of treaties, battles, entertainments, aggrandizements, pomp and circumstance. With the exception of masterful descriptions of topography and scenes of battle, Carlyle falls

into his own dryasdust bin. The affluent and powerful ruler has not the charm of the young prince, though he is vividly portrayed in setback and reversal, and something of his aspiration to glory has majesty in the recounting. His patronage of Voltaire, however, is another matter for discussion.

Prince Frederick had corresponded with Voltaire for several years. When Frederick became king, he invited Voltaire to visit him. The philosopher accepted the invitation because he hoped to convince the new king that peace was the best system for all, and he traveled to Germany as an emissary for Cardinal Fleury. When Frederick realized that Voltaire was acting as a diplomat for the cardinal, his relationship with the philosopher cooled rapidly and soon Frederick was attacking Voltaire's theories. Carlyle, the doughty but dour Scotsman did not like the "crafty" Voltaire or his Madame du Châtelet, even to the point of ridiculing the poor mistress in death. He asks his readers to disregard Voltaire's writings on the subject of Frederick as lies, a request we

must in turn suggest in connection with Carlyle on Voltaire.

Embedded in the fourth and fifth volumes are sly though satiric barbs which enliven battles and treaties. On the other hand, there is seldom a question among scholars and none among military men of the worth of these latter volumes, which are carefully composed and documented.

The Seven Years' War and the failure to resolve the Russian problem marks the conclusion of this ambitious work, beginning with the "Afternoon and Evening of Friederich's Life." The repairing of a ruined Prussia, the partition of Poland, and the Bavarian war telescoped into the greater acts of reform, agricultural advances, and stable government. Although the last chapter is an appendix of a day in the life of the great general and ruler, "a Daguerreotype" which repeats something of an opening chapter written years before, the book effectively ends with the death of the monarch, an account of his burial, and a valediction restating the Carlylean thesis.

HISTORY OF KING RICHARD III

Type of work: History

Author: Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)

Time: 1483

Locale: England

First published: 1543

Principal personages:

RICHARD PLANTAGENET, Protector and then King of England, Richard III

ELIZABETH, wife of deceased King Edward IV

DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, the ally of Richard

About 1518, at the age of forty, Sir Thomas More stopped work on his *History of King Richard III*. This was the time when he was about to become a valuable member of the Council of Henry VIII, the beginning of a political career that would lead to his death and martyrdom in 1535. The work itself bears the mark of Thomas More the humanist scholar, rather than Sir Thomas the cour-

tier or St. Thomas the martyr. Written in both English and Latin versions, presumably concurrently, the *History* was broken off at the speech of the Duke of Buckingham and Morton, Bishop of Ely, one week after Richard's coronation. The English version was then completed by Richard Grafton and published in the Hardyng and Halle chronicles, before being published in 1557 as a separate

work edited by More's nephew, William Rastell. More had planned at first to extend the *History* to include the record of his own times, up to Henry's VII's death, but for reasons of his own he put the work aside.

These reasons may have had their roots in the polemical nature of the work. It is very much a treatise against tyranny and nonmoral statecraft, a refutation of Machiavelli some years before *The Prince* was even completed. Far from being a Tudor apologist, as he is sometimes thought to be, More is nonpartisan. He is against tyranny in any king, whether it be Richard III or Henry VII. A sense of his own well-being, perhaps, is what leads him to draw his moral lesson from Richard alone and not risk extending his criticism to the kingship under Henry VII. This is the reason why one should remember that it is the Thomas More of the *Utopia* and not the Thomas More of the years of Tudor courtiership who is writing at this time.

The *History of King Richard III* is not only significant as an example of the humanistic education of princes, but it is also important as the model for other histories to follow. Historians tell us it was not equaled in excellence until the appearance of Sir Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, written more than a hundred years later. His historical methodology is not always exemplary, for much of what he says is based on conversations with others and much is used for the polemical thesis he is trying to develop. Though not objective, nor completely accurate, the facts he presents are probably closer to the truth than many scholars in past centuries, notably Horace Walpole, have been willing to admit. Nevertheless, what strikes the reader immediately is the vivid character of the writing and the ability to make the historical characters really seem to have once been alive. The fact that over a third of the work is in the form of speeches and dialogue indicates the book's dramatic character.

The characters are wonderfully alive. Edward IV is not only a model prince who was politic in counsel and who treasured wisdom, thus fitting in well with More's thesis about kingship, but also a lustful king whose youthful excesses are duly recorded yet pardoned by More because they did not interfere with the ruling of the kingdom. Jane Shore, moralized if not immortalized by Thomas Churchyard in *A Mirror for Magistrates*, is sympathetically drawn and her illustrious past contrasted with her harsh old age, for she was still living at the time of the writing. Henry, Duke of Buckingham, is treated as a surprisingly naïve conspirator, and the gap between his supposed guile and his actual naïveté gives More a chance to exploit fully the irony he sees present throughout the chronicle of the times.

The characters who are drawn in most depth are Queen Elizabeth and King Richard. Elizabeth, the widow of King Edward IV, is sympathetically portrayed. The great scene with her in the sanctuary of Westminster is marked by the pathos and even tragedy of her certain knowledge of what will happen if she allows her younger son to leave the protection of the sanctuary and yet the necessity for her to pretend that she trusts Richard. The verbal jousting between the queen and those trying to pry her son from her could be put almost directly upon the stage, and the final, dramatic separation of mother and son is equal to any scenes on the English stage before Shakespeare. Her clear-sightedness, deliberately contrasted with Buckingham's obtuseness, gives her tragic stature while it keeps him a figure worthy of contempt.

The blackness of Richard is dramatically, if not historically, justified. In a world turned upside down by revolt, he is the personification of unnaturalness. Everything about him is unnatural, grotesque, and evil. First, there is his unnatural appearance, his crooked back and malevolent look. More tells us he was born with teeth and came out of the

womb feet first. As the unnaturalness extends from his appearance to his actions, we see him causing his blood relatives to be murdered. This evil is illustrated vividly in his scheme to destroy the two princes in the Tower, a deed assigned to Sir James Tyrell and carried out by his two lackeys, John Dighton and Miles Forest. Finally the poison spreads to the political order itself where the lack of rightful, thus natural, succession leads to many horrors. All this unnaturalness reaches a climax in the nightmares that More says came to Richard as his life drew to its violent close. These terrible dreams disturbed the restful nature of sleep and perhaps inspired Shakespeare in his own handling of the dream scene in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third*.

The ability to depict vivid scenes such as that of Richard waking trembling from his sleep is another reason for the lasting interest of the history. This scene, the one with the queen, the dream of Stanley about the boar (symbol of Richard) with the slashing tusks, and especially the great "strawberry episode" in which Richard's innocent, offhand request for some strawberries is swiftly followed by his seizure and execution of Hastings, accomplished with a speed that leaves the reader breathless and those around Richard with no time to object, are all examples of how Thomas More is able to develop the dramatic possibilities inherent in the historical situations. Perhaps the most dramatic scene of all, at least the one that best illustrates More's gift for irony and humor, is the one in which the Duke of Buckingham and the Mayor of London are trying to prepare the people for Richard's usurpation. Buckingham is much taken with his flair for rhetoric and expects that after his long speech the people will not only be reconciled to the usurpation but will cry out for Richard to be king. Instead, his speech is met with complete silence. Buckingham turns to the mayor, who tells him that perhaps the people had not understood what he said.

Buckingham repeats the whole speech, with several more flourishes, but meets with the same response. Finally some of Richard's men, planted advantageously throughout the audience, cry out for Richard, and the Duke replies that he is happy to see so many behind the new king. Not far behind the ironic detachment in the narration of this scene is a very severe condemnation of usurpation of any sort.

This depiction of character and scene is made possible by the vigorous prose employed by More. The *History of King Richard III* is a fine example of how English could be used for the purposes of rhetoric and represents a considerable prose achievement at a time when English was considered second to Latin as the language of the learned. The style is vigorous, humorous, ironic, and the rhythm is characterized by the balanced cadences. Some of the long sentences, never obscure though sometimes complex, have the balance of the prose of Samuel Johnson. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Johnson quoted extensively from More in his essay, "The History of the English Language," which he appended to his Dictionary. As a work of prose, the *History of King Richard III* is a landmark.

Thus there seem to be four main facets of the work that demand attention and account for the book's lasting worth. It remains a valuable example of More's own thought and of the humanistic tradition in which he was educated. It is important as an example of English history, both for what it tells us of King Richard III's life and time and for the model it sets for later histories. It is important in that it gave dramatic impulse for one of Shakespeare's early plays and may have had some deeper influence on the development of his thought. But most of all, it is important for the style in which it is written and the dramatic characterization and confrontations which that style brings so vividly to life.

HISTORY OF THE REBELLION AND CIVIL WARS IN ENGLAND

Type of work: History

Author: Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1609-1674)

Time: 1625-1660

Locale: England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, France, and Spain

First published: 1702, 1703, and 1704

Principal personages:

CHARLES I,

CHARLES II,

EDWARD HYDE, Chancellor of the Exchequer, later Lord High Chancellor, Earl of Clarendon

LUCIUS CARY, Lord Falkland

WILLIAM LAUD, Archbishop of Canterbury

OLIVER CROMWELL,

GENERAL GEORGE MONK

The *History of the Rebellion and the Civil Wars in England* has been called the first great English history, without which Macaulay's famous continuation would not have been possible. Clarendon's work was first published in three volumes, in 1702, 1703, and 1704, at Oxford, through the effort of his second son. *The Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon, . . . Written by Himself*, a companion volume, was written expressly for his children and was not published until 1759. The history was begun informally, being compiled during his two periods of exile in which the earl hoped that something could be learned to improve the future from the "wicked times" of vindictive lawlessness. As an Anglican, loyalist, and legalist he acted always out of high principles during the exasperating Short and Long Parliaments, in exile, and in the Restoration court "full of excess, idleness, and luxury; and the country full of pride, mutiny, and discontent."

The work is not known for its accuracy, although the first draft was completed when state documents were available, nor is it known for its completeness; Clarendon was biased and treated in detail the Royalist argument, to the neglect of the Commonwealth's. However, he was aware that his art and method were different, full, vigorous, "with fidelity and freedom of all I know of persons and things."

As an Oxford bachelor of arts in the Middle Temple, he had moved among the literati and intelligentsia; Ben Jonson and Lord Falkland were his mentors and friends. For twelve years a member of the House of Commons, he was quick to follow the lead of Falkland, learning statesmanship under his tutelage. Clarendon was inspired by the feeling of the revolutionary times, by classical historians whom he knew well, and by historians of his own time, notably Hooker. The history proper begins with his own removal from Parliament to the position of trusted adviser, chief defendant and speech writer, and Chancellor of the Exchequer for the ill-fated but kingly Charles I. Clarendon's advice to Charles I, which was not heeded, was to bring about a conciliation of the factions of Puritans, Royalists, Levellers, Catholics, and Presbyterians. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Clarendon raised money to support the royal cause and provide a government in exile. During this time he also wrote defenses of the king against the scurrilous accusations of Cromwell's faction. When King Charles delivered himself to the Scottish army at Newark in 1646, his trusted adviser turned to the aid of the exiled Prince of Wales. After a break with Queen Henrietta Maria in France, he went to Spain in an attempt to enlist Catholic forces in a restoration of the monarchy.

In exile in Jersey, the great statesman continued his defense of the king while writing his great work. Clarendon advised Charles II at the time of the Restoration in 1660, and it is here that the *History of the Rebellion* comes to a conclusion, although during his banishment in 1668 Clarendon replaced some of the documents with portraits of influential and pivotal figures of the period. Clarendon never deserted his friends. He defended them against malicious slander, high treason, and any false charges made in the heat of the emotional times. The portraits were deeply and artistically conceived in their candor and touching in their defence of innocence, particularly in death of King Charles I, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Falkland, who were executed at the time of the regicide.

The overcoming of his wise counsel through malicious mischief on the part of his highborn enemies, and in the face of thirty years of service to two monarchs, is characterized by restraint even when he faced a doubtful posterity. His autobiography, written in the third person and for his family, extends the history, recounts the disappointment of his daughter's marriage to the Duke of York, later King James II, contains his praise of General George Monk, his elation over the return of the monarchy, his disappointment in the "French-influenced" court of Charles II, his good advice for avoiding the

Dutch menace, and his sincere praise of crown and church.

The keynote to this remarkable work is Clarendon's respect for and adherence to constitutional law: he opposed Parliament when it became dictatorial and the king when he became irresponsible. Clarendon's reputation, then as now, was clear of any taint of self-serving, although his banishment seemed to be the result of overuse of power and complicity in the war with the Dutch. His judgment, discounting his own claims, always was enlightened and his conciliatory manner as exemplary as that of Sir Thomas More; but always his conscience was clear and his Anglican, Royalist, legalistic actions were consistent with his views.

In that "fit season" of the publication, his sons were loyal servants of the king, his daughter was the Queen of England and later the mother of queens, and his reputation was cleared. His grand canvas of cause and effect, together with his insight into men and their motives, has produced a monumental work almost without parallel in history and letters. He was aware that his panoramic view was an innovation, that his analyses of personages manipulating events with such dire consequences were literary as well as historical; and he wrote a rhythmic prose, perhaps too antithetical and parenthetical even for the convoluted style of those times, yet with verve and directness. His work looks toward the Age of Reason.

HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF KING HENRY VII

Type of work: Biographical history

Author: Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

First published: 1622

Principal personages:

HENRY VII, the first Tudor monarch of England

CHARLES VIII, King of France

FERDINAND OF ARAGON, King of Spain

LAMBERT SIMNELL and

PERKIN WARBECK, impostors claiming the English throne

Sir Francis Bacon wrote in his *Advancement of Learning* of the importance

of biography as a branch of historical writing, pointing out that it is individuals

who direct the actions that are recounted in historical chronicles and suggesting that these events can be best examined in the light of the characters of the men who make them. It is this principle that underlies Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, which is one of the first analytical biographies in the English language.

Bacon wrote his history of Henry VII in a few months during the year following his impeachment in 1621. He was exiled from London, and therefore from many of the sources that would have enabled him to produce new information about Henry's reign. He depended heavily upon the sixteenth century chronicles, especially the history of the early years of the century written by Polydore Vergil. What is original and noteworthy in Bacon's volume is his study of the personality of his subject and its effect upon the course of the English nation during his reign. Bacon is original, too, in his strong emphasis upon the laws of Henry's day; as a distinguished lawyer and Lord Chancellor of England at the height of his career, he was thoroughly familiar with the statute books and the development of the common law, and he felt the significance of innovations in the reign he chronicled. He praised Henry's laws as "deep, and not vulgar; not made upon the spur of a particular occasion for the present, but out of providence of the future, to make the estate of his people still more and more happy; after the manner of the legislators in ancient and heroic times."

Bacon follows a chronological plan in his history, concentrating upon the years after the Battle of Bosworth Field, where Henry dethroned Richard III in 1485. His account alternates between narration and set speeches in the manner of the classical historians; the conversations between important personages add considerable interest to the book.

Bacon presents many facets of Henry's personality as he relates his actions on first gaining the throne. There is a mas-

terful analysis of the king's deliberations about the wisest grounds for claiming royal power, which he held by conquest; through his wife, the eldest surviving child of Edward IV and the heir through the Yorkist line; and in his own right, less clear, through the Lancastrian line. Bacon pictures Henry's reasoning in this manner: "the inconveniences appearing unto him on all parts, and knowing there could not be any interreign, or suspension of title, and preferring his affection to his own line and blood, and liking that title best which made him independent; and being in his nature and constitution of mind not very apprehensive or forecasting of future events afar off, but an entertainer of fortune by the day; resolved to rest upon the title of Lancaster as the main, and to use the other two, that of marriage and that of battle, but as supporters, the one to appease secret discontents, and the other to beat down open murmur and dispute."

Through his account of the major events of the reign—the successive uprisings of discontented commoners and fractious noblemen; invasions by impostor-Plantagenets who claimed to be true heirs to the throne; lengthy negotiations with Emperor Maximilian, the ineffectual ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, and with King Charles VII of France, a considerably more formidable foe; and the slow formation of an alliance with the politically sagacious Ferdinand of Spain, whose throne rested on foundations almost as uncertain as Henry's—emerges a picture of the English king as a man cautious and deliberative, reluctant to fight, yet skillful in using the threats of war to fill his own coffers, merciful to most of his rebellious subjects, but ruthless in the extermination of others, notably Edward Plantagenet, one of the few surviving Yorkist claimants to the throne, when their deaths seemed expedient.

Henry's skill in the game of statecraft is evident in Bacon's discussion of the lengthy and somewhat confusing conflict with Charles of France over the control

of the Duchy of Brittany. The author cites a message from Henry to Charles proclaiming the English monarch's friendship for both the French king and the Duke of Brittany and offering his services as mediator. Bacon explains Henry's desire to avoid military conflict whenever possible: "A fame of a war he liked well, but not an achievement . . . and he was possessed with many secret fears touching his own people, which he was therefore loath to arm."

The liveliest portions of Bacon's narrative are the accounts of the uprisings on behalf of Lambert Simnell and Perkin Warbeck, boys brought forth by opponents of the king, the former as Edward Plantagenet, the latter as Richard, Duke of York, one of the princes murdered in the Tower of London. Both impostors were supported by English noblemen and by Continental sympathizers with the Yorkist cause, especially Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, a close relative of Edward IV. Henry coped skillfully with both plots, punishing their instigators and trying to make examples of the youthful conspirators. Simnell was made a kitchen boy; Perkin, whose campaign came far nearer success and lasted for several years, became a juggler at court for a time. However, after he had escaped, been arrested again, and been imprisoned in the tower, he initiated a new and far more threatening conspiracy with the real Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick, who, as the nephew of Edward IV, had a legitimate claim to the throne. As a result of their plot both Warbeck and the prince were executed. Henry incurred considerable public displeasure by his severity with them, though he tried to place the blame on his ally, Ferdinand, who co-operated by saying that he could not allow his daughter, Katherine of Aragon, to wed the Prince of Wales so long as Warwick lived as a threat to the succession of his future son-in-law.

Bacon does not gloss over the later years of Henry's rule, when his henchmen Empson and Dudley perverted the

laws of the realm to confiscate land and wealth from subjects all over the kingdom. Henry's avarice increased with his age, and he left enormous wealth at his death, riches soon to be dispersed by his pleasure-loving son, Henry VIII.

Bacon concludes his account of Henry's reign with a character sketch of the king. He summarizes the traits of character that he has shown influencing English policy throughout the reign, portraying Henry as a shrewd ruler, a crafty statesman who calculated the effects of all his actions and "knew the way to peace was not to seem to be desirous to avoid wars." He was his own chief counselor, a man who had no really close friends or advisers. Empson, Dudley, and others who performed his less attractive tasks served him only as the "instrument" does the "workman." Henry's independence is clear in this comment: "To his confederates abroad he was constant and just, but not open. But rather such was his inquiry, and such his closeness, as they stood in the light towards him, and he stood in the dark to them; yet without strangeness, but with a semblance of mutual communication of affairs."

Henry chose his ministers generally for their cleverness rather than for their birth; he commanded the grudging respect of the nobility, but he was never certain of their loyalty. Yet, unlike many monarchs of his era, he could trust his closest counselors implicitly; only one betrayed him during all the years of his reign.

The king emerges from Bacon's account as a clever man, but a cold and withdrawn one; he seems also to have been a dutiful husband and father. He was far from the most appealing of men, but Bacon, whose temperament was in some ways like Henry's, recognized his greatness: "Yet take him with all his defects, if a man should compare him with the Kings his concurrents in France and Spain, he shall find him more politic than Lewis the Twelfth of France, and more entire and sincere than Ferdinando of

Spain. But if you shall change Lewis the Twelfth for Lewis the Eleventh, who lived a little before, then the consort is more perfect. For that Lewis the Eleventh, Ferdinando, and Henry, may be es-

teemed for the *tres magi* of the kings of those ages. To conclude, if this King did no greater matters, it was long of himself: for what he minded he compassed."

THE HIVE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Camilo José Cela (1916-)

Time: 1943

Locale: Madrid

First published: 1951

Principal characters:

DOÑA ROSA, owner of the café "La Delicia"

MARTIN MARCO, a poor poet

JULITA, the niece of Doña Rosa

CELESTINO ORTIZ, the owner of the café "Aurora"

DON IBRAHIM DE OSTOLANZA Y BOFARULL, the candidate for the Royal Academy

"The Hive" is the name Cela gives Madrid, specifically in a passage describing dawn breaking after the turgid night life of the city. The book is a latticework, a crisscrossing of innumerable lives; the number of characters has been estimated at some one hundred and sixty. Not all of them are principals, of course, but even where only brief glimpses are given of some of them, they all serve to illuminate the whole fabric of shifting contacts. In fact, in any sense of a structured novel, there are not even any principals. Some characters merely appear more often than others.

In some ways *The Hive* resembles the picaresque novel. The majority of the characters are down-and-outers, or on the verge of poverty. Those who are managing to make a prosperous or respectable living are largely grasping or mean. Hunger is always present. The need for the peseta haunts the lives of the Madrileños. Where can one get the most for it? Who does not have it and is trying to get by without it, bluffing or hoping? But the work is not the traditional picaresque novel with an anti-hero whose personality, in the service of many masters, holds the work together. Here there are only recurrent situations, without either the

peripatetic progress of the *pícaro*, or the attainment by him, sometimes, of respectability. No narrative unfolds. None of the characters shows spiritual change. Thus the book is more like Pío Baroja's kind of picaresque world, formless but revealing the swarming life of the city.

The two characters most often seen are the domineering Doña Rosa and the shabby Martin Marco, the nearest thing to an anti-hero. Doña Rosa, owner of the café "La Delicia," is the presiding genius of the book. She is in a sense the queen bee of the hive, although there is nothing regal about her. She is avaricious, a slave driver, and a bully. When young, she had been courted by the wastrel son of a marquis. Today, though she is fat and dirty, she is a rich woman, covered with diamonds. In addition to the café, she owns the house it is in and four apartment buildings, located in other parts of Madrid, whose tenants she terrorizes. She is shareholder in a bank, and it is rumored she has trunks full of gold scattered here and there.

The public that visits Doña Rosa's comes in two waves, as is the case, Cela says, with all cafés: the after-lunch group, around three o'clock, for coffee and, he adds, bicarbonate, and the after

half-past-seven group. Early arrivals of the latter receive angry looks from the former; and the same thing happens to stragglers from the afternoon group. Each group likes to feel that it is the Old Guard.

But although the action centers mainly around Doña Rosa's café, other places figure frequently in the kaleidoscopic shifts of scene—the café "Aurora" owned by Celestino Ortiz, who had fought in an anarchist unit during the Civil War and who keeps a copy of Nietzsche under the bar; the house of assignation of the widow Doña Celia Vecino de Cortés, who keeps the portrait of her dead husband Don Obdulio Cortés López on the wall of the most expensive bedroom; the dairy of Doña Ramona Bragado, which is a cover-up for the same line of business, purchased by her out of money left her by the Marquis de Casa Pela Zurana, a senator and twice Undersecretary of Finance, whose mistress she had been.

Still other cafés are visited, as well as the interiors of people's apartments; for example, that of Doña María Morales de Sierra, who spies on everybody in the neighborhood and reports all she sees or hears to her bored husband, a technical assistant at the Ministry of Public Works. Cela likes to insert sly references to important-sounding positions (a dig at Spanish *empleomanía* or urge for government employment).

Martin Marco is a poet who writes (for warmth) either in the Central Post Office or the Bank of Spain; paper is plentiful in both places—telegraph or deposit forms. He carries cigarette stubs in an envelope. He sleeps on a cot in a store-room of the apartment of Pablo Alonso, and sometimes when his brother-in-law, Roberto González, is not at home, he cadges a meal from his sister Filo, with whom it is strongly suggested he has had incestuous relations in the past.

Roberto is a free-lance bookkeeper who works for, among others, Señor Ramón, a baker. Pablo Alonso is in business but apparently does nothing much about it; he

spends most of his time with his mistress Laurita, who is beginning to bore him with her doglike devotion.

One of the regulars at Doña Rosa's is Señorita Elvira, a poor drab who maintains some of her liaisons through correspondence, cadges cigarettes, dines on a *peseta's* worth of chestnuts, and suffers horrifying nightmares. In the past, one of her patrons was Don Pablo (not Pablo Alonso) who still watches her with interest at Doña Rosa's, much to his wife Pura's disgust.

The manager of Doña Rosa's is Consorcio López, who came to Madrid from the town of Tormelloso; there he had seduced Marujita Ranero and, threatened by her brother, had fled the town. Marujita later gave birth to twins and sent pictures of them to Consorcio, who is quite proud of his unofficial family. Marujita, now Doña María Ranero de Gutiérrez, and rich, comes to Madrid with her husband. Because he is an invalid, she packs him off to a nursing home and loses no time in renewing her affair with Consorcio. She also offers to buy out Doña Rosa.

One of the most amusing characters is the pompous Don Ibrahim de Ostolanza y Bofarull, who is practicing his speech of acceptance into the Royal Academy. A neighbor in his apartment building, Don Leoncio Maestre, bursts in to tell him that Doña Margot, another neighbor, has been strangled with a towel. She was the mother of Julián Suárez Sobrón, an effeminate character known as The Lady Photographer. Unknown to his neighbors, he had come home, found his mother dead, and rushed out in panic to a meeting with his friend Señor Giménez Figueroa, known as The Chip. These two end up in jail for questioning, while Don Ibrahim presides over a meeting of the tenants of the building to decide what to do. The Judge Magistrate has already been to the scene, arrested Don Leoncio Maestre, who after discovering the body is in a state of shock, and told the rest to go home; he will call them if he needs them. How-

ever, Don Ibrahim feels the need for the meeting, and here again Cela reveals his extraordinary flair for assembling resounding names and variegated backgrounds.

Among those present we find Don Antonio Pérez Palenzuela, an employee of the National Syndicates, who feels that he should be in charge of the proceedings; Don Camilo Pérez, a chiropodist; Don Exuperio Estremera, a priest; Don Lorenzo Sogueiro, the owner of the Fonsagrado café; Doña Juana Entrena de Sisemón; Don José María Olvera, a captain in the Army Ordnance Corps; Arturo Ricote, a clerk in the Banco Hispano Americano; Don Julio Maluenda, a retired merchant marine officer; and Pedro Tauste, the owner of a shoe repair shop called "The Footwear Clinic."

Don Ibrahim, continuing to make long-winded speeches, proposes that they all mention Doña Margot in their prayers and pay for a funeral mass. This they all vote enthusiastically to do.

Doña Rosa's sister, Doña Visitación, is married to Don Roque, and they have three daughters—Julita, Visi (or Visitación, named for the mother), and Esperanza. They have a maid with the engaging name of Escolástica. Esperanza is the only one of the daughters engaged; she is to marry Agustín Rodríguez Silva, the owner of a drugstore and fifteen years her senior. Julita is in love with Ventura Aguado, a law student who has failed the examinations for public notary for seven years, not counting—Cela inserts—the war years. The two end up in a liaison at Doña Celia's, under the eyes of Don Obdulio's portrait. An ironic touch is that Julita's father, with Lola, maid to Doña Matilde, a pensioned widow, patronize the same establishment. They pass each other on the stairs. Julita says she has just been to the photographer. Don Roque is on his way to see a sick friend. The only one blissfully unaware of all that is going on is Visitación, the mother.

Petrita, the maid to Filo and Don Roberto, is sent to Celestino's café on an er-

rand. When mention is made of recent peevishness on Martin Marco's part and the fact that he is in debt to Celestino, she sells herself to the latter for the twenty-two pesetas owed, because she is fond of Marco.

Victorita, a packer at a printer's, is in love with the sickly Paco, and shamelessly earns money through the offices of the go-between Doña Ramona, in order to keep him alive. Paco is the brother of Eloy Rubio Antofagasta, a poor ex-student who has just been given a job by Don Mario de la Vega, the owner of a printing shop. Don Mario is also the one making a financial deal for Victorita's favors.

Martin encounters an old friend from the university, Nati Robles, who had been an earnest, political-minded, unattractive girl. Now she is a beauty, elegantly dressed. Martin asks Nati for five pesetas, so that he can pay for standing her a treat. She gives him fifty and tells him to buy her a present. When he finally selects a print for her at the bookshop of a friend, he learns that he has lost what was left of the money. Seoane, the violinist at Doña Rosa's, finds it and is thus able to buy some dark glasses for the weak eyes of his sickly wife.

There are many more characters in Doña Rosa's gallery: Don José Rodríguez de Madrid, a magistrate's clerk, is held in envy by all his friends because he has won a prize in the lottery. The fact that it was only forty pesetas does nothing to dispel their wonder; there is a young poet, given to fainting spells in cafés, who must be carried, unconscious to the lavatory, where the smell of the disinfectant revives him; there is another pensioned widow, Doña Asunción, the friend of Doña Matilde. Besides visiting Doña Rosa's they play cards at Doña Ramona's dairy. Doña Asunción has two daughters, one married to a clerk in the Ministry of Public Works, the other living with a university professor in Bilbao, a fact of which Doña Asunción is very proud. Doña Matilde has a son who is an impersonator in Val-

encia; his stage name is Florentino de Mare Nostrum.

The staff at Doña Rosa's is as varied as the clients: Padilla, a kind-hearted cigarette boy who lends cigarettes to Señorita Elvira; Luis and Pepe, hardened waiters, indifferent to Doña Rosa's tirades; Alfonsito, the messenger who goes out for the newspapers and is always scolded by Doña Rosa for staying away too long; and the musicians—Macario, the pianist, and Seoane, the violinist. Their czardas and Viennese waltzes are a particular delight to Doña Matilde and Doña Asunción. Macario is engaged to a girlish, homely woman, thirty-nine years old. Seoane and his sickly wife live in a damp, basement flat they rent for seventy-five pesetas a month. But the apartment is close to the café and he can walk to work.

There is also a little gipsy boy, six years old, a flamenco singer, who haunts the neighborhood. He is self-supporting and, in the midst of all the tawdriness he witnesses, curiously innocent. When kicked by a drunken prostitute early in the day, his only thought is that it is a terrible time of day to be drunk. He collects the copper coins flung to him by his audiences, and by the time he has sung from one to eleven he has enough to get his supper at an inn where he is known—a plate of beans, bread, and a banana, for three pesetas, twenty céntimos. After his supper, he sings until two in the morning. He sleeps under a bridge on the outskirts of Madrid.

There is some resemblance in the pictures of Madrid night life between *The Hive* and José Suárez Carreño's *The Final Hours*. But the latter centers around three main figures, and lacks the amused satirical outlook of Cela. In *The Hive* the handling of personal and local names is one aspect of Cela's attitude. "Dons" and "Doñas" are sprinkled among the resounding names of the pretentious,

the mediocre, and the disreputable. One firm mentioned is that of "Casimiro Pon's Widow and Sons, Threads and Yarns." A man who inherited a cakeshop called "The Sweetener" from a brother who died in the Philippines changed its name to "The Site of Our Forefathers." The final heir changed this to "The Golden Sorbet." A fairly successful bar called "The Earthly Paradise" became run-down and the woman owner ran off with a drunken guitar player. There is even a profane parrot named Rabelais.

In the end, Martin Marco appears to have done something shocking, but the reader does not know specifically what it is. From the timing and from the sequences one can read between the lines, and from what we know of his inherent nature, it would not seem to be connected in any way with Doña Margot. But a newspaper item indicates to his friends and sister and brother-in-law that something must be done for him, that he must be got out of the way. The book ends with Martin's visit to the grave of his mother; he is filled with thoughts of reforming his life and still unaware himself of what he has done. The author leaves him with a sense of foreboding. He has read all of the newspapers which he carries in his pocket except the part concerning himself.

This book is a long way from the contrived *tremendista* cynicism of Cela's *The Family of Pascual Duarte*, published in 1943. (*Tremendismo* was a popular literary trend of the 1940's which emphasized the horrifying mainly for its own sake.) Here, in spite of his sardonic attitude, and the possibility that he himself might be the first to disavow it, Cela reveals a compassion for the unfortunates, the failures, the outcasts that inhabit the "hive", and along with it, in spite of the world of venality and sometimes cruelty displayed, there is always present the Spanish sense of decorum.

THE HOLY STATE AND THE PROFANE STATE

Type of work: Moral discourse

Author: Thomas Fuller (1608-1661)

First published: 1642

Clergyman and moralist, Thomas Fuller was one of the most popular preachers of his age, even though he sided against the Puritans during the Commonwealth and died shortly after the Restoration. He was, in other words, popular despite his opposition to the emotionally charged Puritan overthrow of the monarchy. Such popularity was difficult to obtain, but as Thomas Fuller knew, it was even more difficult to keep. He was a prolific writer, and in his many books he always simplified his presentation of even the weightiest matter so that his books would have profitable sales. The result of this simplification is a style that is at once cogent and austere, instructive and entertaining.

But style is only one cause of his popularity. Fuller's agile mind, quick to penetrate into the core of whatever problem was at hand and slow to embrace any tenet that did not withstand scrutiny, was one that would be rare in any age. Not only did he have discrimination of mind; he was also witty, and he was able to captivate his congregations by his balance of the profound and the humorous. In his writings he preserved this ability, so that *The Holy State and The Profane State*, his first book, is never weighty in spite of its didacticism or trite in spite of the detailed moral rules.

The four books of *The Holy State* and the one of *The Profane State* are composed of three major types of prose. First, Fuller lists the traits that best illustrate a certain character. These maxims are pithy, easily remembered statements such as (for an advocate) "He is more careful to deserve, than greedy to take, fees," or (for a statesman) "He refuseth all underhand pensions from foreign princes." But Fuller knew that maxims alone are seldom read and even less frequently obeyed. When he gives a maxim, he im-

mediately explains it with a clever anecdote or epigram. Second, after he has listed several of these maxims, he illustrates proper behavior in a "character" or a brief sketch exemplifying ideal types. In these "characters" lie the summations of character-types that were familiar to the Elizabethan theatergoer such as the favorite, the good schoolmaster, or the good servant. In terms of literary history, these "characters" were more than summations of the popular theatrical figures of an earlier age; as the prototypes of the descriptions later to be found in novels, they were influential in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as statements of ideal types for the novelist's pen. Third, at times when a historical character will adequately illustrate one of the moral principles, Fuller inserts a terse, greatly stylized biography. In an age when the art of biography was still in its infancy, these biographical sketches helped to form the eulogy into a literary genre that would mature through Walton and Boswell into the psychologically probing biography of the twentieth century. The biographies in this book include such a broad selection of biblical and historical figures that few types of people are neglected.

In Book One of *The Holy State*, Fuller describes domestic relationships. The nine characters are conceived in their widest seventeenth century application so that the twentieth century reader can get a fairly good idea of what the people of that time thought constituted a harmonious home life. The good wife, for example, is properly obedient to her husband, and the good husband is cautioned not to tell secrets to her because she is too frail to sustain the strenuous responsibility of keeping secrets. The good parent is a combination of love and authority, and through his parents' examples the good

child can learn to honor and obey them. But Fuller is realistic and cynically adds, "If preserved from the gallows, they are reserved for the rack, to be tortured by their own prosperity." Widening his view to other domestic relationships, Fuller proceeds to describe the good master and the good servant; the first should be stern but just, while the second should be quick to obey. The good widow and the constant virgin are special cases, each demands special consideration, even though Fuller believes that all women should marry and raise large families. The final two relationships, the elder brother and the younger brother, lead Fuller from the immediate family because they concern education and inheritance. Five biographies are inserted into the text to expand the lessons. St. Monica illustrates the good wife; Abraham, the good husband; Eliezer, Abraham's servant, the good servant; Lady Paula, a legendary Christian martyr, the good widow; and Hildegardis, a founder of convents, the constant virgin. The fact that Fuller uses Catholic saints and heroines for his illustrations shows his tolerance in an age of Catholic persecutions, but the fact that none of his examples comes either from England or from contemporary history reveals the severe criticism of his times that makes a moralist concerned enough to take action.

Book Two deals with the citizen, the professional man, and the man of the world. As a moralist, Fuller knew that what began in the home must be extended to society as a whole; therefore the same division into roles and into mutual dependences that he so carefully outlined for the home, he preserves for the business world. The good advocate and the good physician should be servants, not masters; they should think of their clients, not of their purses. But the controversial divine and the true church antiquary should think first of the dogmas rather than pursue far-fetched personal or sectarian ideas. This was especially cogent advice at the time when the Puri-

tans were attempting to justify their recent execution of King Charles I, and Fuller's opinion of such an uncivilized action is clearly, though tactfully, presented. The general artist and the faithful minister are ideal mixtures of learning, moderation, and humility. In these Fuller shows his sensitive awareness of the responsibilities of those men who are in a position to sway public opinion. The good parishioner, the good patron, and the good landlord are also leaders, and since they are closer to the people, their roles are much more important for the maintenance of a "godly" society. The rest of the good citizens—master of a college, schoolmaster, merchant, yeoman, handicraftsman, soldier and sea captain—represent the majority of British wage earners in the 1640's. Their responsibilities can be summed up into a simple dictum: be obedient to your betters and live a Christian life of prayer, industry, and uprightness. The last two citizens are the good herald and the true gentleman, positions that occupy the amorphous gulf between the middle class and the aristocracy and thereby provide the transition to Fuller's discussion of the highest class.

Book Three interrupts the natural progress of the discussion because Fuller thought that it should balance the halves of his folio. This book, subtitled "General Rules," gives moral and social rules that are true for all men regardless of class. Here Fuller covers such broadly different topics as hospitality, self-praising, and tombs. His purpose in this book is to describe the life of moderation in which the individual is neither too proud nor too humble. According to Fuller either extreme in any trait, even religious zeal, is bad; the fully developed Christian gentleman should seek the way of harmony. He should be neither profligate nor unrealistically saintly. The six maxims that Fuller lists in the chapter "Of Moderation" form the philosophical basis to the entire folio: "Moderation is not a halting betwixt two opinions, when the thorough believing of one of them is necessary ■

salvation. Nor is it a lukewarmness in those things wherein God's glory is concerned. But it is a mixture of discretion and charity in one's judgment. Yet such moderate men are commonly crushed betwixt the extreme parties on both sides. Violent men reel from one extremity to another. Pride is the greatest enemy to moderation." With this enlightened view of moderation, Fuller is almost Aristotelian in his accounts of the general rules that should govern all men.

In Book Four, Fuller treats the aristocracy, and in contrast to Book One most of the biographies are of Elizabethan courtiers and nobles. Also, most of the principles are pointed, for the book was published after the fall of the English monarchy. Fuller discusses ten characters and eleven biographies, each worded in a way that points skillfully to the moral decadence of his own contemporaries. The favorite or court parasite opens Fuller's discussion on the conduct of this class, and his disreputable character is illustrated by the lives of Haman, Cardinal Wolsey, and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Fuller's treatment is sarcastic and bitter, for this is one social position with which he has little patience. The wise statesman, on the other hand, is exemplified by William Cecil, Lord Burleigh, Queen Elizabeth's trusted adviser; he is a man who is constant, loyal, and shrewd in the affairs of his monarch. The good judge (Sir John Markham) and the good bishop (St. Augustine and Bishop Ridley)

are men who must maintain the laws and authority of the State and the Church; they must be wise, perceptive, and just. The true nobleman and the court lady are persons of the nobility, but blood alone does not give them their superior graces. That must come from their behavior, for a noble person must act in a noble way. Because the nobility forms the backbone of the nation, it must seek the very best life, or the country will collapse from within. The good ambassador and the good general, the prince and the heir apparent, have the responsibility of holding the country's place in the balance of power both between countries and within the state. Finally, Fuller describes the king, the man who must be virtuous and gentlemanly if the rest of the people are to be the same. Only if the highest member of society is spotless, will the rest be spotless.

The last book is *The Profane State*. Here Fuller describes the behavior that inevitably leads to social, moral, and religious anarchy. The harlot, the witch, the atheist, the hypocrite, the heretic, the liar—these are the types of people whose behavior is sinful and vicious. The traitor and the tyrant, Fuller's last characters, are the two whose actions lead to the end of peaceful Christian society and represent the establishment of Satan's kingdom. This final book shows that, if the moral maxims outlined in the first four books are not obeyed, the result will be a state that no one would willingly choose.

HOMAGE TO MISTRESS BRADSTREET

Type of work: Poetry

Author: John Berryman (1914-)

First published: 1956

The admirable Mistress Bradstreet receives in this poem more than homage. The work is a paean of praise to a woman who, as all students of American history and literature agree, was praiseworthy. Her biography, even in a skeletonized version, reveals the causes.

Anne Dudley was born in 1612, presumably in Northampton, England, of a well-read and intelligent non-Conformist father. In 1628, at the age of sixteen, she married Simon Bradstreet, aged twenty-five, a graduate of Cambridge University. They sailed to America on the *Arbella* in

1631. Anne herself was a Puritan of profound religious conviction, but she was intelligent and well-educated, and with her natural stimulus strengthened by her surroundings in the New World she was capable of strong-willed behavior, even to the point of rebellion. Thus she could not accept without questioning the tenets of American Calvinism. She responded energetically to the numerous demands of her father and her husband, both of whom became governors of Massachusetts Colony. Yet she still had time to become the mother of eight children, to overcome illnesses, to be a loving daughter and wife, and to write enough poetry to fill a fat volume. She died in 1672.

John Berryman's response to Anne Bradstreet is one of total approbation. He warms to her with a fervor at times approaches adulation. The poem covers her whole life. But it is not in fact a biography; rather, it is more than a mere account of the external aspects of her life. The work is at the same time a spiritual biography of the woman and of Colonial Massachusetts. Berryman's success in his attempt is notable because of the power of his language and because of the general success of his style.

Berryman catches the essence of his subject's conflicting characteristics, the power of her personality, in the first stanza. She is restless but patient. She was a loving mother but also a scholar of both literature and the Lord. As the stanzas develop, so does her character. She realizes that in the alien New World she and her husband must love each other. They must recognize worldly love and its importance because time is transitory. The years rot away.

The fourth stanza introduces the art and power of the poem. The first three and a half stanzas are spoken by the poet about his subject. At this point the poet's voice blends with that of Mistress Bradstreet, who continues the poem with only occasional interruptions by the poet and with an occasional dialogue between her and someone else. This stylistic tech-

nique has been highly praised. It is an effort to push back the horizons of poetic technique begun by the great American innovator Ezra Pound and carried on by various followers. It is a method by which the poet can reach more deeply than common into the very essence of poetry, telescoping statements and feelings, omitting transitions, plumbing to the very axis of poetry. This strength, if misused, can result in mere affectations, in technique for technique's sake and in terribly flat and meaningless statements. Generally, however, the level of poetic accomplishment is effectively high indeed.

The fifth stanza, spoken by Mistress Bradstreet, continues the catalogue of happenings in her world. She recounts the voyage on the *Arbella* and the death of the woman for whom the ship was named. More deeply, the poet touches on her hopes and aspirations and fears, the Puritans' troubles in the New World. All recountings are energized by the subject's strong character, brightened by her personality. She breathes poetry and revels in life. She deftly switches from present to past, effectively overlaying one time with another. She goes back to her youth when smallpox blasted the beauty from her face but when Romance and Mystery were brought to her in the person of Simon, her husband to be.

Her memory is agonized by memory of her revulsion at the Calvinism of John Cotton and her attraction, good Calvinist that she was, to Catholicism; she recognized that she must be disciplined against the easier attraction. The uncertain journey of her life is re-emphasized time and again as she remembers that her patience is short and she revolts from the life around her. The conflict between body and soul—the weakness of the flesh and the hoped-for strength of the spirit—are especially powerful in her memory. Sex pulls her like a magnet, then floods her very being, rising to a crescendo of glory in the accomplishment of having children, especially her first, born when she was twenty-one. Perhaps no lines in the

whole poem are superior to the statement of the joy of this accomplishment. She is ecstatic.

The iron bands of her environment are revealed in her reaction to the trial of Anne Hutchinson for her "Antinomianism," her "traducing the ministers and their ministry," and her consequent excommunication and banishment by the synod of churches and by Governor Winthrop. Mrs. Bradstreet's reaction was ambivalent. She despised the mistreatment of Anne Hutchinson for her dissenting views, but she burned more inwardly than outwardly.

As she reveals herself in her examinations of herself, Mistress Bradstreet is of the earth and of the spirit, a balance never firmly and indisputably established, never sure of the ascendancy of which. She is also Mother Earth, encompassing the whole of life. Like Walt Whitman at a later period, she is large enough to include all. She renounces nothing, however petty and repulsive. The ending is thus a great affirmation.

In the style and technique of the poem lies its glory, and an occasional lapse into

weakness. The language is compact, muscular, powerful. The words are simple, direct, earthy, slangy, idiomatic, and effective. The art of telescoping and compacting sometimes, however, vitiates its own strength, as when, for example a fifty-two-word, eight-line parenthesis separates, for no logical or aesthetic reason, the subject from its verb. But such technical weaknesses are few.

In outline this curious but somberly moving poem of fifty-seven eight-line stanzas is effectively organized as the spiritual autobiography of a complex personality who lived with physical hardship and spiritual travail the double life of a woman and an artist. Readers may be repelled at first by the rough intellectuality of the verse and the elliptical intimacy of the material, but a careful reading is likely to show how apt the writer's form and diction are for his task. In this work the poet shows that the American past may be employed as a subject for serious poetry without reshaping it to the wonder of legend or exploiting it for sentimentality.

HYDRIOTAPHIA: URN-BURIAL

Type of work: Philosophical essay

Author: Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682)

First published: 1658

Hydriotaphia: Urn-Burial; Or, a Discourse of the Sepulchral Urns Lately Found in Norfolk is at the same time one of the great glories of Renaissance scholarship and without doubt one of the greatest prose poems in English literature.

The work is ostensibly a study on some forty or fifty Roman funeral urns that had been recently discovered near Norfolk. But the whimsical and associative mind of the author immediately reads philosophical implications out of, and rich analogues into, the urns.

In the "Epistle Dedicatory," addressed to "My worthy and Honoured Friend, Thomas Le Gros, of Crostwick, Esquire,"

Browne sets his tone. He broods on the common fate of all men, asking who can know the fate of his own bones or how often he is to be disinterred and scattered, as the bones in these Roman urns are now being brought again from their private seclusion. The uncertainty of man's ashes depresses his enthusiasm for earthly affairs at the same time that it excites his curiosity. He feels that it is his right and duty as physician, and man, to read the bones of our ancestors and learn from them, to make the living profit from the dead and to keep the living alive as long as possible.

Browne begins with a study of burial

customs of ancient times, touching first on Biblical Abraham and the patriarchs, and Adam, then proceeds whimsically to the assertion that God interred but one body, that of Moses. Browne next takes up the subject of the burning of corpses, which he asserts was widespread in ancient times. He begins with Homer's account of Patroclus and Achilles, discusses the older tradition in Thebes, and then ranges to Israel, to the Amazons, and even to the Americas.

Next Browne says he will not discuss the ceremonies and rites of cremation or interment that are generally touched on by authors, but will talk only on the collected bones and ashes of the Romans discovered recently in England. He then moves from this narrower subject to a learned discussion of the burial customs of the peoples loosely associated with, or suggested by, the predecessors of seventeenth century Englishmen—the Romans, Druids, Danes, and others.

He points out that Caesar expressly says that the priests of the Druids used to burn and bury. History is silent on whether this custom held in the land of the early Britons, but since history speaks out clearly that the Romans distinctly influenced these early natives of Britain in many ways, for example, in getting them to build temples and wear gowns and study Roman laws with the intention of following it, probably, Browne feels, these people also followed their religious rites and customs in burial.

Browne further reminds his readers that in Norway and Denmark numerous burial urns obviously not of Roman origin in design are found containing not only bones but numerous other substances such as knives, pieces of iron, brass and wood, and, in Norway, one containing a "brass gilded Jewes-harp."

In the next chapter Browne continues with an inquiry into the various ways people have decorated the insides of sepulchers and tombs. He observes that men, such as Ulysses in Euripides' *Hecuba*, have not been so much concerned with

how great they have been in life if they can be richly memorialized in death. He observes that great men affect great tombs, and large urns contain no mean ashes. He observes also the changing customs about the artifacts that have been placed in tombs, from the earliest customs when want dictated that only the most meager items be included to more opulent times when objects of much value were buried with the remains of the great people.

Browne also discusses the inscriptions which have headed graves, what kinds of bones make the best skeletons, the various positions in which peoples have placed their dead, and the time allowed between death and interment.

From the physical facts of life and death Browne rises to the spiritual. In these flights of fancy he, as a good Christian, reaches his greatest heights of philosophy and poetry. He realizes that life is transitory, of short duration, and life after death should be of greater importance than life on earth. He believes, however, that many people, perhaps most people, throughout the ages have failed to anticipate the wonders of the next world because of eagerness to exhaust the pleasures of this world. His feelings on the subject are at the same time an affirmation of faith in religion, which is characteristic of his general attitude, and a horror at those people who are shortsighted in their overall view.

The full value of this magnificent work can be appreciated only by actual reading of some of the great organ-like lines, of which the following are typical:

Were the happiness of the next world
as closely apprehended as the felicities
of this, it were a martyrdom to live;
and unto such as consider none here-
after, it must be more than death to dye,
which makes us amazed at those audaci-
ties, that durst be nothing, and return
into their *Chaos* again.

.

But to subsist in bones, and be but

Pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration.

.

To be namelesse in worthy deeds exceeds an infamous history.

One of his most eloquent meditations deserves quotation in full:

But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the Pyramids? *Herostratus* lives that burnt the Temple of *Diana*, he is almost lost that built it; Time hath spared the Epitaph of *Adrian's* horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equall durations; and *Thersites* is like to live as long as *Agamemnon*. Who knows whether the best of men be known? or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, then any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Without the favour of the everlasting register, the first man had been as unknown as the last, and *Methuselahs* long life had been his only Chronicle.

Oblivion is not to be hired: The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the Register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven Names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since

contain not one living Century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the *Aequinox*? Every hour adds unto that current *Arithmetique* which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the *Lucina* of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live, were to dye. Since our longest sunne sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darknesse, and have our light in ashes. Since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying *memento's*, and time that grows old in it self, bids us hope no long duration: Diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

In many ways the most philosophically incontrovertible and stylistically memorable of Browne's statements in this work is the oceanlike roll of "Grave-stones tell truth scarce fourty years. Generations passe while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks."

One of the curiosities associated with Browne is the fact that the author of such a work as *Urn-Burial* should himself become a victim of persons interested for other reasons in burial places. His coffin was invaded in 1840 and his skull (a craniological wonder) was stolen and subsequently sold by the sexton of the church in which he was interred.

THE IDLER

Type of work: Periodical essays

Author: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

First published: 1758-1760

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele created with their *Tatler* and *Spectator* papers a vogue for the periodical essay that lasted almost to the end of the eighteenth century. One of their greatest successors in this genre was Samuel Johnson, who wrote three series of articles for weekly newspapers, naming them for the *personae* he adopted in each. The *Rambler* essays were published between 1750

and 1752; the *Adventurer*, in 1753 and 1754; and the *Idler*, in the *Universal Chronicle*, in 1758 and 1759.

Throughout his life Johnson lamented his tendency to while away his hours in inactivity, and he must have taken wry pleasure in beginning the third series by assuming the role of one who deliberately devoted his life to useless pastimes. In keeping with his role as the *Idler*, John-

son tried to keep the tone of these last essays lighter than that of his earlier works. However, he inevitably included some of his characteristic reflections on the burdens of life, commenting on the inevitable disappointments that follow most hopes, on the tendency of friendships to dissolve through suspicion, separation, envy, or competition, and on death and his hopes for immortality.

These serious reflections comprise only a small portion of the *Idler*; more often Johnson comments in an amusing vein on the follies of his age. Even his language is more informal than usual, for he has substituted a flowing colloquial style for the carefully balanced phrases and the Latin-ate vocabulary of much of his work.

Many of the *Idler* pieces purport to be letters from various readers, and through them Johnson gently satirizes social foibles of the mid-eighteenth century. A merchant, Zachary Treacle, writes to complain that his wife distracts him all day long in his shop, strolling about and asking "a thousand frivolous questions" when she might assist him, leaving the housework to a slatternly maid and spoiling their children. He considers the greatest indignity imposed on him to be their regular Sunday afternoon promenade when he is often forced to carry his child.

Betty Broom, a lady's maid, sends the *Idler* two letters describing her misfortunes as one who has more education than the world thinks her station in life entitles her. Another mistreated husband, Peter Plenty, complains of a wife who cannot resist sales, with the result that his house is full of unused and useless articles: "the dining room is so crowded with tables, that dinner scarcely can be served; the parlour is decorated with so many piles of china, that I dare not step within the door; at every turn of the stairs I have a clock, and half the windows of the upper floors are darkened, that shelves may be set before them."

Many of the essays are enlivened by briefer portrait-caricatures of familiar

types. Tom Tempest and Jack Sneaker are the fanatical Jacobite and Whig, each convinced that the party of the other is the embodiment of all evil. Tempest whispers to his friends that a new monarch will soon replace the Hanoverians whom he despises, while Sneaker devotes his hours to worrying about new Papist conspiracies. Jack Whirler, characterized in another essay, is the man who is perpetually busy, so completely occupied in rushing from one task or engagement to the next that he never has time to accomplish anything. The traveler who finds every step a dangerous adventure is pictured in Will Marvel; he regales his acquaintances with vivid accounts of the perils he barely escaped on journeys that were, in fact, quite uneventful.

One of the most interesting of the portraits, one of Johnson himself, was contributed by his friend Bennet Langton, who submitted to the *Idler* the journal of a scholar, including the projects he planned to complete in three days and the way his hours actually passed. Distracted by visitors, outings, and new ideas, he made little progress on his proposed works, though sudden inspiration contributed to the creation of other pieces. This sketch fits well with what is known of Johnson, who always had a number of enterprises in hand and completed some of his best essays as diversions from the scholarly labors of his dictionary.

Each of Johnson's volumes of essays included literary criticism. In the *Idler* he introduces Dick Minim, a young man who, on acquiring an unexpected fortune, set himself up as an arbiter of literary tastes, gathering the bulk of his knowledge in coffee houses and at the theater and picking up a few critical clichés from books he studied when the playhouses were closed. His literary opinions were always those generally accepted. Faced with a new work he inevitably gave an equivocal judgment: "Till he knows the success of a composition, he intrenches himself in general terms; there

are some new thoughts and beautiful passages, but there is likewise much which he would have advised the author to expunge." Minim was in his element when he had a pupil to instruct in platitudes, and he had a wide following of those who considered him a paragon of learning.

In several of the later *Idler* essays Johnson comments on various literary matters, among them biography, language, and the problems of translation. A renowned biographer in his later years, he considered the genre one of the most interesting literary forms, but he points out the difficulty in achieving objectivity and suggests that only in autobiography can a man be seen without the colorings of praise or blame.

In another piece Johnson defends the "use of hard words," noting that especially in specialized subjects precision can only be achieved through "difficult" language. If a man is describing a building he can convey a far clearer picture by using architectural terms than by employing the vocabulary of the layman. On the other hand, Johnson discussed the problems of writing "easy poetry," verse which is clear, simple and unadorned, noting that a colloquial or affected style is often mistaken for the pure one he advocates.

A large number of the *Idler* essays do not fall into any of the categories outlined above. Johnson seems to have written, usually extemporaneously, on any subject that happened to catch his fancy. Several essays are Oriental tales with moral themes. In others he makes an impassioned plea for the relief of those in the debtors' prison and argues convincingly that the creditors are partially guilty for allowing men to fall into their clutches. He praises the charitable impulses of his time in another paper and commends in particular the work of the charity hospitals. Interspersed among these relatively serious observations are a

witty account of the ladies left languishing when the gentlemen go off to war and a mock tribute to the enterprising woman who rode a horse a thousand miles in less than a thousand hours.

Johnson has few compliments for the press of his day. Their treatment of war news is, he says, dull, and sets up a model story in which the events of a battle are carefully spaced out to enlist the readers' interest for a whole week; it is a mistake to put all the available information in the first article, then reiterate it for days afterwards.

In one of the most amusing essays Johnson ridicules the advertising in the papers, scoffing at the large claims made for bed coverings, face creams, and patent medicines: "The vender of the 'Beautifying Fluid' sells a lotion that repels pimples, washes away freckles, smoothes the skin, and plumps the flesh; and yet, with a generous abhorrence of ostentation, confesses, that it will not 'restore the bloom of fifteen to a lady of fifty.'"

The *Idler* reveals many facets of Johnson's talents; he succeeds equally well as a portraitist, a satirist, and a moralist. It is in the last, most familiar and most satisfying guise that Johnson concludes his series. He meditates on the sadness of ending any activity and suggests that all conclusions are little deaths: "An even and unvaried tenour of life always hides from our apprehension the approach of its end. . . . The uncertainty of our duration is impressed commonly by dissimilitude of condition; it is only by finding life changeable that we are reminded of its shortness." Though the *Idler* has been meant as entertainment, Johnson expresses the hope that his readers have come, through reading it, to realize that there approaches "the day in which every work of the hand, and imagination of the heart shall be brought to judgment, and an everlasting futurity shall be determined by the past."

IGNATIUS HIS CONCLAVE

Type of work: Theological satire
Author: John Donne (1572-1631)
First published: 1611

In *Ignatius His Conclave*, the Anglican divine John Donne wrote a satire that is at times fanciful, at times devastating, and on occasion screamingly vindictive against the Jesuits. In the final scene Ignatius Loyola, Spanish founder of the Society of Jesus, seats himself next to Lucifer in Hell. *Ignatius His Conclave* appeared in both Latin and an English "translation." A foreword purported to be by the printer but obviously by Donne states that the author was unwilling to have the book published but finally permitted the printer, who cites the examples of Erasmus and Luther, to publish it.

Intending to annihilate the Jesuits with satire, Donne allows his wit and invention to be overpowered by venom. Ignatius' lengthy oration listing the vices of the Popes becomes tedious. Even tedium, however, cannot darken the flashes of Donne's imagination which dart throughout the satire. The comments of his "disembodied soul" are almost always delightful. His awareness of Galileo's discovery of the telescope made public only a year before this satire was written and his use of the Copernican cosmography set Donne in advance of Milton, who preferred to follow Ptolemy. His conquest of space and awareness of "other worlds" on stars make him sound contemporary. The upside down standards in Hell in which vice becomes virtue foreshadow Fielding.

Donne says that his "little wandering sportful Soule" went traveling through the universe while he lay in an "extasie." He prefers to be silent concerning the Heavens rather "than to do Galileo wrong by speaking of it, who of late hath summoned the other worlds, the Stars to come neerer to him and give him an account of themselves." He "saw all the rooms of Hell open to my sight." In the

most remote room, he finds Pope Boniface III and Mahomet contending about the highest room in the secret place of Hell reserved for the greatest innovators. Boniface glories in having expelled an old religion and Mahomet in bringing in a new. Donne thinks that Mahomet has no chance of winning because he attributed something to the Old Testament and his followers live in "barren unanimity." Boniface has a better chance because he had not only ignored but destroyed the policy of the State of Israel established in the Old Testament and his successors in the several orders "have ever been fruitful in bringing forth new sinnes, new pardons, and idolatries and King-killings."

As Donne's soul stands listening, pretenders to the eminence of innovator ask admission. The first is Copernicus, whom Donne is surprised to see until he remembers that the Papists have extended heresy to include almost everything. Copernicus says that, pitying Lucifer thrust into the center of the earth, he raised him and his prison the earth up into the heavens so that God no longer enjoys his revenge on him. He has "turned the whole frame of the world" and is "thereby, almost a new Creator."

Lucifer is in a quandary. He thinks that to deny Copernicus admission would be unjust but to admit one of his ambitions and undertakings is dangerous. Ignatius Loyola, who had subtly worked his way up to the Devil's chair, perceives this perplexity. Although, says Donne, Ignatius in life was ignorant and had never heard of either Ptolemy or Copernicus and might have thought that Almagest, Zenith, and Nadir were saints' names and "fit to bee put in the Litanie, and *Ora pro nobis* joyned to them," he had learned a great deal in Hell from the Jesuits arriving there daily. Ignatius asks

Copernicus if he has invented anything which benefits Lucifer. Ignatius thinks not. He also says that Copernicus' findings may be true. Ignatius thinks that Clavius, who designed the Gregorian calendar and denied Copernicus and "the truth which at that time, was creeping into every mans minde," better deserves admission. The new Calendar has "egregiously troubled" both heaven and earth. The saints no longer know when their days are. St. Stephen and John the Baptist have to be awakened ten days sooner so that they can come down to the places where their relics are preserved and work miracles. "Let, therefore, this little Mathematitian (dread Emperour) withdraw himselfe to his owne company." If the Pope should decree that the earth does not move and that an anathema shall be inflicted on all that hold with Copernicus, then he and his followers "may have the dignity of this place." Copernicus stands as still "as he thinks the sun."

When the next pretender says that he is "Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombast of Hohenheim," Lucifer trembles, thinking this a new exorcism, perhaps the first verse of St. John taken out of the Welsh or Irish Bible. When he understands that the words are the name of a newcomer, he recovers and asks what the new arrival has to say to the Great Emperor Sathan, Lucifer, Belzebub, Leviathan, Abaddon. Paracelsus (a German physician and alchemist, 1493-1541) asks to be admitted because his experiments and medicines have killed many while assuring them that their diseases, especially the pox, were curable. Thinking themselves in no danger, these ill people persevered in licentiousness. Also, Paracelsus made poison tasteless.

Ignatius asks why Paracelsus should be favored when the Jesuits, though untrained, practice medicine? He tells Lucifer that men like Paracelsus tamper with metals belonging to Lucifer. Why should these metals be used to cure disease when they could more fittingly be given as trib-

ute to Lucifer's brother and colleague, the Pope? Paracelsus will have to be content to govern in chief that "Legion of homicide-phisitians, and of Princes which shall be made away by poyson in the midst of their sins, and of woemen tempting by paintings and face-physicke." Paracelsus accepts this decision.

Machiavelli decides to outwit Ignatius, who is making all the judgments. Instead of addressing Lucifer, Machiavelli speaks to Ignatius as next after Lucifer, his "beloved son." He intends to make Lucifer feel that Ignatius threatens his authority. Machiavelli says that Ignatius' sons have brought equivocation into the world. This they learned from "The secretest Records of Hell itselfe: that is out of the minds of Lucifer, the Pope, and Ignatius (persons truly equivocal) [who] have raised the life againe the language of the tower of Babel, so long concealed and brought us againe from understanding one another." Compared to the achievements of the Jesuits, his efforts, Machiavelli says, seem childish; yet he has provided the Jesuits with an alphabet and certain elements and was a schoolmaster to them. He says that he taught not only the prince how to possess a free commonwealth through perfidy and dissembling of religion but also the people under his oppression how to conspire and remove a tyrant "so that from both sides, both from Prince and People, I brought in an abundant harvest, and a noble increase to this kingdom."

Moved by his oration, Lucifer feels that he is bound to reward Machiavelli. Aware of Ignatius' ambition, he thinks Machiavelli a fit "instrument to oppose against him." However, Ignatius, more subtle than the Devil, throws himself at his feet and adores him. Finally, getting control of his voice, Ignatius charged that this "obscure Florentine" has transgressed against Lucifer, the Pope, and the Order of the Jesuits. He says that Machiavelli flatters Lucifer in order to trap him. Machiavelli, he says, in life did not even believe in the Devil, thinking that all his

inventions came from his own wit. He has belittled the Popes by attributing to them the sins of common men when, actually, their sins were so enormous and unusual that most men would never have thought of them. He gives a long catalogue of the sins of the Popes, ranging from granting indulgences for twenty thousand years for preposterous sins, to Popes who were guilty of all licentiousness and aberration, and finally to transferring empires, ruining kingdoms, and deposing kings. Also, he says, Machiavelli had said that the Pope is the prime mover of evil and so had bypassed the Devil himself. There is nothing in Machiavelli's commentary which might be of use to the Church. Men knew how to lie long before Machiavelli. After a long discourse on the "reforms" in the Devil's religion comparable to the reformation in the Church, Ignatius concludes, "In all times there have been Friars which have far exceeded Machiavel."

Machiavelli, at last, vanishes. Donne says, "Truely, I thought this Oration of Ignatius overlong, and I began to thinke of my body which I had so long abandoned, lest it should putrefy, or grow mouldy, or bee buried."

When Lucifer decides to withdraw to his room and admit none but Ignatius, he is surrounded by a whole army of souls begging for admission. Among them is Christopher Columbus "who having found all waies in the earth and sea open to him did not feare any difficulty in Helle." Ignatius sees that Columbus and all the rest are turned away to lower regions. Lucifer, fearing for his authority,

decides to make one decision of his own, to admit Philip Neri (Saint Philip, Filippo Nero, 1515-1595, Italian priest, founder of Congregation of the Oratory). After a long debate with Ignatius about Neri, Lucifer yields when he sees that Ignatius has given a sign and all his Jesuits are ready to support him. The English legion, he notes, is fiercer than the rest.

Seeing no way to leave out Ignatius, Lucifer tells him that he cannot divide his kingdom with him nor can Ignatius inherit it because Lucifer cannot die. However, he will write to the Bishop of Rome who will have Galileo draw the moon like a boat closer to the earth. All the Jesuits will cross to the moon, where they can easily unite and reconcile the "Lunatique Church" to the Roman Church. After the Jesuits have been on the moon a little while, there will grow naturally a Hell over which Ignatius may have dominion. He may even advance to the other stars, "which are also thought to be worlds." Lucifer tells Ignatius that he may "beget and propagate many Hells, and enlarge your empire, and so come nearer unto the high seat which I left at first."

A false rumor reaches Hell that the Pope has canonized Ignatius. Ignatius turns to find the seat next to Lucifer taken by Pope Boniface. Lucifer, afraid of losing his seat to Ignatius, helps him hurl Boniface from this eminence.

Donne's spirit returns to his body. He says that after seeing a Jesuit turn the Pope out of his chair in Hell, he suspects that the Jesuits will try as much in Rome.

IN MEMORIAM

Type of work: Elegy

Author: Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

First published: 1850

In Memoriam A.H.H., *Obiit MDCCCXXXIII*, unquestionably one of the four greatest elegies of English literature, records the intellectual, emotional, religious, and aesthetic changes Tennyson under-

went throughout a sixteen-year period following the early and tragic death of his closest friend, Arthur Henry Hallam in Vienna, on September 15, 1883. The year *In Memoriam* was first published,

1850, was also the year Tennyson married Emily Sellwood and succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate.

In Memoriam as truly represents the chief Victorian conflict of science and faith as any work of its era; and Tennyson's attempt to reconcile the religious doubts arising from his personal sorrow and the effects of pre-Darwinian theories of evolution was hailed by thinkers of his time as an intellectual landmark. The cyclic change, the turn from private grief and despair to the larger public vision and concern for wider, social issues, that can be found in this poem reflects Tennyson's growing acceptance and reconciliation with the problems of his age.

It appears that Tennyson did not conceive publishing the one hundred thirty-one lyrics of *In Memoriam* until late in the 1840's, when he brought them together as one poem, arranging them so as to reflect in the three-year time scheme of the poem the sixteen-year period of his life which they actually represent. Since these lyrics were written over a long time span, they vary considerably in the tone and mood of reaction to Hallam's death, thus dramatizing lyrically Tennyson's psychological condition. Though many organizational schemes have been offered, the most generally accepted views the poem as illustrating a movement from initial grief (I-XXVII); to philosophic doubt and despair (XXVIII-LXXVII); to rising hope (LXXVIII-CIII); to affirmation of faith (CIV-CXXXI). But the actual growth is more subtle than this and requires close attention to repeated images, such as the two yew tree poems or the two visits to Hallam's house.

The "Prologue," dated 1849, and addressed to "Strong Son of God, immortal Love," expresses the poet's conviction that faith, not knowledge, leads to a harmonious union of the intellectual and the spiritual. The first section then relates the poet's nearly complete self-absorption in grief, but even here we notice a change, evident for example in the difference between "I held it truth" (I) to "I hold it

true" (XXVII). Though Love provides a "higher life" for man hereafter, few can find immediate comfort for present loss in this promise of future tranquility. Nevertheless, the poet affirms his belief that "T is better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all." This acceptance of his experience despite its accompanying sorrow comes only after intervening poems reveal the true depth of his despair; his identification, for instance, with the yew tree, a symbol of death, shows the poet's marked conviction that he, like the yew tree which is not subject to seasonal changes, is imprisoned in grief and can merely endure in "stubborn hardihood."

This fellowship with "Sorrow" (III) induces an intellectual despair and alienates him from comforting Love.

"The stars," she whispers, "blindly run;
A web is woven across the sky;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun. . . ."

In one sense this conception of the universe as a blindly run mechanism is the central intellectual conflict of the poem. In his deep melancholy, Tennyson questions not only the justice of Hallam's tragic death, but also the justice of the entire creation.

Like a passenger of a "helmless bark" Tennyson moves alternately from numbed despair to self-awareness (IV), and finds composing poetry an anodyne for pain (V). Poems IX-XVII constitute a group unified by the poet's meditation upon the return from Italy by ship of Hallam's body. A "calmer grief" now pervades his heart (XI).

The pain of grief "slowly forms the firmer mind" (XVIII), but locked in his heart remain the deeper sorrows that words cannot relieve (XX). He writes not to parade his emotions publicly, but because he must (XXI).

The second section commences with the first Christmas celebration some three months after Hallam's death. The poet hears the bells' message of "peace and

goodwill" but almost wishes never to hear them again. Yet even in his despondency, the bells recall his happy youth, and, touching pain with joy, ease his misery. In the renewal of "old pastimes in the hall" they make a "vain pretense" (XXX), but find consolation in the thought of an afterlife for the dead, though what that afterlife may be "remaineth unrevealed" (XXXI).

The second yew tree poem illustrates a lightening of his burden, for he now sees the tree with "fruitful cloud," subject to change like his grief. The group of poems from XI to XVIII represents Tennyson's attempt to resolve the question about afterlife and also the possibility of a reunion with Hallam. These speculations are not meant to solve the problems, he tells us (XLVIII), but were "Short swallow-flights of song" which soothed his mind.

In LIV Tennyson expresses the vague "trust that somehow good/Will be the final goal of ill." But the two following poems call in doubt this qualified optimism, so that all he can permit himself is to "faintly trust the larger hope" (LV). In his agitated state of mind the poet views Nature "red in tooth and claw" (LVI). The remaining portion of this section deals with the former relationship of the poet with Hallam.

The third section opens with the second Christmas and finds the poet with the sense of the abiding presence of his friend. His subdued grief allows him to treasure their friendship.

Which masters Time indeed, and is
Eternal, separate from fears.

Tennyson contemplates the possibility of a visitation by Hallam and experiences a "mystic trance" in XCV, when "The dead man touch'd" him "from the past." The third section concludes with a four-poem series relating to the Tennyson

family's removal from Somersby, with its pleasant and sorrowful associations.

With the fourth and final section the poet turns from the past and his personal grief to the future of mankind; this change is signaled by the famous lyric "Ring out, wild bells" (CVI). Tennyson resolves not to allow sorrow to alienate him from society (CVIII). Hallam's qualities emerge clearly for the first time; in a series of poems Tennyson praises his friend, particularly for his attributes of leadership and dedication to social good.

Tennyson draws an important distinction in CXIV of the difference between knowledge and wisdom; with wisdom man does not fear death since wisdom is "of the soul," while knowledge must learn to submit to wisdom and "know her place." "Acknowledging "Love" as his "lord and king," Tennyson proclaims that "all is well" (CXXVII). His optimism is buttressed by his knowledge that Hallam

O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

As the elegy draws to a close the poet more strongly feels the certainty of cosmic design: "That all, as in some piece of art,/Is toil coöperant to an end." (CXXVIII). He feels more confident of Hallam's omnipresence: "Thy voice is on the rolling air;/I hear thee where the waters run" (CXXX). His love, though founded on their previous earthly relationship, is "vaster passion" now that Hallam's presence is spiritual and diffused through "God and Nature." The elegy concludes with the poet's self-confident assertion of the permanence of the "living will" which purifies our "deeds" and of the "faith" in truths not to be "proved" until our deaths.

In the "Epilogue" Tennyson celebrates the marriage of his friend, Edward Lushington, to the poet's sister.

IN THE AMERICAN GRAIN

Type of work: Historical narratives and essays
Author: William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)
Time: The tenth century to the 1860's
Locale: The Americas
First published: 1925

Principal personages:

ERIC THE RED
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
HERNANDO CORTEZ
JUAN PONCE DE LEON
HERNANDO DE SOTO
SIR WALTER RALEIGH
SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN
THOMAS MORTON
COTTON MATHER
PÈRE SEBASTIAN RASLES
DANIEL BOONE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
JOHN PAUL JONES
JACATAQUA
AARON BURR
EDGAR ALLAN POE
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

History, to paraphrase Corinthians, is many things to many men. It is the record of what really happened and also the story of what men in later times have believed really happened. It is the story of what men thought and felt and did under the pressure and crisis of decisive action. It is concerned with the noble, the foolish, the violent, the base. It is the careful untangling of political, social, and economic motives and forces in the national experience. It is the unvarnished record of fact and it is also the romantic dream of something men have believed in and died for. It is a record of truth but never the final truth, for each age interprets the events and personalities of history according to its knowledge or need. So it becomes almost meaningless to talk about the "lessons" of history or their meanings: history is a story that is never quite finished because it is always open to reappraisal or new conclusions. The many-sided aspects of history provide one reason for the appeal it holds for its writers, professionals, and amateurs alike.

In the American Grain, one of the authentic classics of the 1920's, is a poet's venture into historiography. As such, it is unstated by conventional theory, without debt to academic authority, and as brilliant and idiosyncratic in purpose, insights, and structure as D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Also, like Lawrence's critical essays, it is a book written before its proper period. Only in recent years has it been recognized as a revitalizing view of the American past, an original work of considerable magnitude and weight.

At the same time, it was never without influence during the years when it was out of print and neglected by both the critics and the public. One literary debt that comes quickly to mind is found in Hart Crane's *The Bridge*. Traces of Williams' insights and idioms run through the poem. The half-title page of "Powhatan's Daughter," for example, requotes a passage from Thomas Morton's *The New England Canaan*, and there are obvious likenesses between the vision of Columbus

in the opening "Ave Maria" section of *The Bridge* and Williams' essay titled "The Discovery of the Indies." Another poet who may have been influenced by *In the American Grain* is Archibald MacLeish in *Conquistador*, especially by Williams' description of the destruction of Tenochtitlan and his accounts of the *conquistadores*—Cortez, Ponce de Leon, and De Soto. There may be echoes also in the closing paragraphs of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, in the reference to Henry Hudson and his sailors when they saw for the first time the green shores of the New World and were filled with wonder at the promises the new continent held for men's westering dreams. All of this is not to say that these writers were guilty of plagiarism, only that *In the American Grain* offered to perceptive readers images and impressions to be held in memory and knowledge until they could be released in fresh works of the imagination.

Despite its significance as a seminal work, *In the American Grain* is even more important for the function it performs. Williams' purpose, briefly, was not to give a new interpretation of history or to consider its uses, but to discover the thing itself, its nature and the conditions under which it took shape. In "Père Sebastian Rasles" he set forth his aim in a discussion with Paul Valéry, who in the essay is called Valéry Larbaud. Impressed by the other man's knowledge of and interest in American history, Williams claims that everything which has happened or been produced in America springs from discoverable roots, rests on ground capable of being explored and mapped. In the face of the other man's urbane probing into Williams' mind and attitude, the poet insists that it is not possible to trust the men who have interpreted history, from the time of Cotton Mather on. He will go to the sources, he declares, not to uproot history but to make history reveal itself, to trace to their past beginnings the obscurities and partisan views that oppress him, to uncover in

the documents of the time the evidence needed to separate fact from myth.

Williams' reordering of the American experience from the century of the Norseman to the Civil War is symbolic rather than philosophical. Clearly, his task involved more than the retrieving of a usable past from the leveling action of time and from legends growing out of the common imagination, or the attempt to find in the meaning of the past a way out of the unsettled present into the future. Exploratory in nature, the book is first of all an act of discovery and recovery, two aspects of the single process of knowing and understanding. Some events or personalities that most historians gloss over or ignore have been brought into the foreground; others recede into it. For Williams is not tracing the development of a society or justifying the culture it created. To speak of a culture implies an abstraction, a phenomenon of cause and consequence which allows no place within its long perspective for the accidental, the discrete, the contingent. This view reduces all history to a concept free of all the rich confusion of chance and circumstance that is life itself. Instead, Williams employs what Allen Tate has called the "Short View" of history, the particular stories of the particular lives of man engaged in contemporaneous interactions of place, time, and personality. Believing, like Emerson, that history is a record of the lengthened shadows cast by men on the earth, Williams reveals in this book the same qualities that we find in his poetry, a strong sense of the "Local"—which is not to be confused with local color—and a ruling passion to express his vision of the world as concisely and concretely as possible. To the poet who declared that there is no reality except in things, no other course was possible.

His experiment in historiography involved also an experiment in style. To give richness of historical content to his book he borrowed lavishly from his sources. Quotations from letters, chroni-

cles, and journals are scattered through the sketches—passages from Columbus' journals, reports of the Salem witchcraft trials, letters written by Benjamin Franklin and John Paul Jones—to color the prose and give it vitality and the ring of truth. Sometimes this quoted matter complements Williams' own prose; sometimes it clashes with dramatic vigor. One is reminded throughout of one of Williams' statements on the writing of poetry: his declaration that the writer takes words as he finds them but transforms them, without destroying their clarity and passion, into an expression of his own feelings and perceptions so presented that they become revelation. It is not what a writer says, he claimed, that is important as a work of art, but the thing he makes with such intensity that it lives by its own force of outward movement and wild inward logic. In the brief narratives and essays making up *In the American Grain* the writer's historical imagination holds revelation of personality and meaning of situation in delicate but compelling balance, while the language gives the whole resonance and depth.

The book is divided into twenty chapters—dramatic narratives, lyric interludes, brief character sketches—ranging in space and time from the settlement of Greenland through the voyages of Columbus and the exploration of Kentucky to the Civil War, and dealing with such representative or illustrative figures as the *conquistadores*, Sir Walter Raleigh, Cotton Mather, George Washington, John Paul Jones, Aaron Burr, Poe, and Lincoln. The arrangement is chronological, but the scale of values accorded to the men and events is quite different from that found in the history texts. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, is no longer the wise founding father but the great apostle of catchpenny materialism and opportunism whose face, appropriately, now decorates the one-cent stamp. Aaron Burr, on the other hand, is not the self-seeking man who tried to upset the established order of government because of

personal ambition; Williams sees him as a good soldier who brought into politics an element of democratic theory necessary to the times but neglected by other men already in power or aspiring to office, a champion of liberty at a time when freedom was subverted to bureaucratic tyranny, a man finally driven to the imprudence and excesses of which his opponents had already accused him.

Two themes run through the book. One is the failure of Americans to create for themselves a sense of place. The early settler on these shores was already an alienated man, an exile from European society, and on the new continent his feeling of separation became complete. He saw America not as a place to be sensed and assimilated but as a land to be conquered for selfish ends. The forces motivating him were external circumstances of time and place on the one hand, the opportunity to exploit a vast and rich continent, and on the other inward necessity, the need to justify his own identity as a new man in a new land. The first of these drives was public and pragmatic; it hastened the westward movement, created the myth of scientific progress, and laid the foundation for an industrial society and the comforts of an expanding, affluent technical economy, all the while ignoring the cost in terms of individual hardship, economic waste, and the erosion of human values. The other was private and moral. From it we get in part the restlessness, the violence, the communal guilt and shame, the inner fears, the secret loneliness and desire that agitate our society today. Only at rare intervals, in Williams' view, does history present an individual so completely and individually himself and so much at ease in his environment that he shows himself capable of acting as an American, not as a transplanted European or an alien in his own society: Daniel Boone as the explorer and settler, Aaron Burr as the politician, Edgar Allan Poe as the artist, Abraham Lincoln as the leader of a divided nation in conflict with itself. This

conflict is implicit in the beginnings of our history. Columbus sensed without really understanding the meaning of America and saw with bright vision the possibilities of place and life in the New World. The opposite side of the picture is the story of the Spanish conquerors, the impact of the cross and sword of feudal Spain upon a pagan society. Occasionally the exploited land revenged itself on its despoilers; the disappointments of Cortez and the secret river burial of De Soto are in effect payment for the destruction of Tenochtitlan and the rape of Mexico and Peru.

Williams' second theme is the blight of Puritanism over the American land. Like Hawthorne, he viewed the Puritans as "miserable wretches" who possessed strength of purpose and will but not the tolerance of strength or the wisdom of purpose. Puritan bigotry and ignorance were demonstrated in the treatment of Quakers in New England and the Salem witchcraft trials. The abstract ideal of purity and salvation almost entirely excluded from Puritan life the idea of place or a sense of beauty as a concrete, natural thing. Williams finds Cotton Mather niggardly and narrow, a man of great but unassimilated learning, whose belief in the supernatural often verged on superstition. Hostile to a flowering of the spirit, the Puritans tried to convert all life into facts and figures, and Benjamin Franklin, as revealed in his maxims, was the inheritor of their materialism and morality. If *In the American Grain* contains a major flaw, it is found in Williams' treatment of the Puritan. Although he does not succumb to the Puritan-baiting popular among intellectuals in the 1920's, he sometimes criticizes Puritanism, or expresses his grudging admiration, for the wrong things. Today we realize that Puritanism was more than an abstract ideal of an earthly paradise, a theocracy of dogmatic belief and practice; it was also a seedbed of political freedom and independence of mind and spirit.

Because he himself was a poet, per-

haps, the true hero of Williams' argument is Edgar Allan Poe, whom he calls the first writer to recognize the possibilities of American life in art and to give shape in language to the spirit of place and time. For Poe, culture was not something to be brought into the national experience but something to be revealed because it was already present in the conditions and circumstances of the world around him. In his poems, short stories, and criticism, he tried to find universal meanings in the local, not in setting alone, but in the American psyche, in apocalyptic visions of the American soul. In the end he was defeated by the forms and forces of culture inherited from the past, and he retreated into a region of grotesques. But at best he expressed with originality and vigor the spirit of place, used the creations of his imagination to suggest that literature is a serious business as logical and depth insightful as science or philosophy. He tried to clear the ground of colonial imitation and the growing belief that material advance was the only possibility offered by American life. His effort was moral as well as aesthetic, and for this reason Williams regards him not as a frustrated genius but as a heroic figure deserving the highest praise.

The book ends with a brief appreciation of Abraham Lincoln. The choice is an appropriate one. For Lincoln was our president in the period of the Civil War, the most deeply felt and possessed experience in our national life, the violent summation of all that had gone before and the adumbration of everything that has happened since. Lincoln is here a symbolic figure, an image of the shortcomings and possibilities in our history, a figure of tragic failure as well as a promise of hope. This impingement of the present upon the past gives *In the American Grain* an added dimension, a deeper relevance in our own understanding of the events and the men who have shaped our history. This is a poet's book as well as an amateur historian's, a work in

which the writer's vision provides new insights into historical truths imaginatively viewed and passionately re-created in

language. In it the local view strikes deep into the shape and meaning of the American past.

INCOGNITO

Type of work: Novel

Author: Petru Dumitriu (1924-)

Time: 1940-1960

Locale: Rumania

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

THE NARRATOR, the unnamed witness to the testimony and a minor Party official

SEBASTIAN IONESCO, the hero, a storekeeper

ERASMUS IONESCO, a high Party official

CHRISTIAN IONESCO, and

PHILIP IONESCO, Sebastian's brothers

VALENTINE IONESCO MORCOVICI, their sister

BASIL MORCOVICI, her husband

MALVOLIO LEONTE, Morcovici's rival in the Party

ROMEO ROMANESCO, Sebastian's friend

SABINE, Sebastian's wife

ARTHUR ZODIE, Sebastian's friend

LEOPOLD, a cripple

Until 1960, when he escaped to the West, Petru Dumitriu was head of the State Literary Society of Rumania; he was not only the most powerful man in the literary apparatus of Rumania but was also regarded as his country's leading writer on artistic grounds. Since his escape he has become recognized at least in Europe, as one of those few writers whose talents so far transcend the conventions of nationality as to make them something on the order of writers to the world at large. It is obvious in any case that Dumitriu's stature as an artist raises him above any poet or novelist in the entire history of Rumanian literature.

Incognito, like all of the novels of Dumitriu that have been translated into English previously, was written in French. Given the historical sympathy between France and Rumania and the natural desire of a writer to reach as wide an audience as possible, Dumitriu's adoption of this language was natural. Racially, culturally, and linguistically, Rumania is a Latin island in the midst of an

Asiatic—Slavonic and Magyar—sea, and it is significant that his characters speak, when they speak of literature, not of Dostoevski and Tolstoy but of the poets of France, Italy, and Spain, while the first "foreign" author quoted in *Incognito* itself is Tacitus, in whose *Histories* the narrator, apparently intended to stand for Dumitriu himself, finds remorseless parallels with the state of Rumania in 1960.

It is almost as if, indeed, centuries later in the Rumanian microcosm, the Roman Empire had at last found a creative artist capable of capturing the whole sweep of its decadence and downfall, its decline and the subsequent reign of the Eastern barbarians. *Incognito* should not be read alone but in its proper sequence among all the body of Dumitriu's work thus far, that work which, written for the most part within a five-year period, attempts to render the essence of Rumanian history from the nineteenth century to the time of Dumitriu's own escape to the West. In particular, *Incognito* should be read as the companion piece to *Meet-*

ing at the Last Judgment, to which it stands in much the same relationship as a *Purgatorio* to an *Inferno*.

Focused upon a smaller patch of time than *Incognito* and directed at depicting the character of a particular level in the Rumanian governmental hierarchy, *Meeting at the Last Judgment* describes a Hell on earth, Rumania as a colony in the Soviet bloc, and its inhabitants, the damned, many of them disillusioned, many of them still believing in the Marxist-Leninist cause, all of them in greater or less degree responsible for the creation of a country where life is genuinely intolerable, all of them thus genuinely damned. Their suffering, as it should be in Hell, is not physical but psychological, for the soul is where Dumitriu's interest lies: the country they live in, and particularly the social level, as high functionaries in the imperial apparatus, they live at, make such things as love, friendship, loyalty, self-respect, or charity impossible for them. Their Rumania is ruled instead by brutality, greed, lust, jealous hatred, duplicity, and sub-animal ambition, and one by one they take their turns as victims of this Rumania they have made.

In such a country the mere maintenance of sanity is an achievement; the maintenance of any other human characteristics becomes something of a miracle, a miracle which seems to testify in Dumitriu's eyes to the essential truth, despite all his own evidence to the contrary, in a conception of man as a creature at least capable of his own salvation, if not of any very much higher nobility. Consequently, though he is by no means an "optimistic" writer, one feels at the end of *Meeting at the Last Judgment*, as Dumitriu describes in a few quick pages the narrator's escape with his wife—Dumitriu's child was allowed to join her parents in 1964, having been held hostage for four years—a sudden sense of exaltation.

Incognito may be read as a kind of gloss on this exaltation. All of the char-

acters in the book have already appeared in *Meeting at the Last Judgment*, the difference being that whereas in the previous novel we see them in their basest, most abject, and most superficial aspect, in *Incognito* we see into the secret nobility of their real selves, where it exists, or into the fear of self that creates a Judas.

The central figure of *Incognito*, Sebastian Ionesco, is, in fact, a kind of Christ. The major part of the novel is his autobiography, which he has handed over to the narrator, who has been entrusted by the hierarchy with the job of gathering evidence of a secret conspiracy against the state. This conspiracy actually exists. It is not, however, the kind of conspiracy which the state, thinking only in terms of dialectical materialism, can understand. It is a conspiracy of the soul itself, or of the spirit, and its situation, Dumitriu intends us to see, is exactly like that of primitive Christianity under the Caesars.

It has been customary since Gibbon to treat the conversion of Rome to Christianity as the result of a kind of bribe, the bribe of "everlasting life." Such an interpretation of this major event in Western history is naive in the extreme, ignoring as it does the testimony of the Roman Empire itself. From the melancholy of Vergil and the despair of Horace's Roman odes to the agonizing self-reappraisal of St. Augustine, the Latin writers bear increasing witness to an unease of the spirit which only Christianity, of all the hundreds of available religions (all of them equally proffering the offer of resurrection), could assuage. Rome chose Christianity, one may conclude, because it was "truer," because it replaced some form of consciousness which had been lost in the process of "civilization," because its implied description of human nature fitted with what seemed to be the human facts. Like primitive Christianity, Sebastian Ionesco's secret sect is thus a conspiracy of truth, a conspiracy against the mechanical lie of Rumania's Oriental masters.

Sebastian's narrative begins with his

describing a day in his adolescence, when his country was still a kingdom and a kingdom still renowned for the paganism of its ways. Over every doorway might have been hung the mottoes "*Si piace e lice*" or "*Fayce que voudras*": life on a Danube estate like Sebastian's father's was a perpetual Thélème, a pastoral idyl as it might have been painted by some post-Giorgionesque Italian. In this setting we are reintroduced to Sebastian's brothers and to his sister Valentine, who figure in *Meeting at the Last Judgment* largely as promiscuous, ambitious schemers.

The real leader of the family, dominating the others not only through his own talents and strength of character but also through their pagan capacity to be intimidated by his beauty, is Philip, brilliant and licentious, a symbol, perhaps, of prewar Rumania, doomed to die in the wreckage of the house during a bombardment. The hint of incest, lurking in his younger brother Christian's relationship with their mother, becomes an apparent actuality, during the course of the day, in Philip's seduction of Valentine, which Sebastian stumbles on as a witness. It is this event, as much as any other, that drives him away from the comforts of home to join the army, then allied with the Germans in forcing the Soviets out of Rumanian territory and invading Russia.

Captured by the Russians, Sebastian is converted to Communism and repatriated by the Red Army's victorious drive to the West. What he hopes to find in Communism, just as he had hoped to find it in heroic sacrifice to patriotism, is purity; his conversion is an attempt to atone for the sins of his people. Nothing deludes like success and for a while, as he becomes one of the leaders in the movement to overthrow the kingdom and establish a Soviet state, Sebastian believes that he has found the purity he was after. He discovers that Valentine, Christian, and Erasmus, his third brother, have all found their way into the Party apparatus as well, following his lead despite the

fact that he is the youngest and least prepossessing of all. Though never a Party member, Valentine in fact is destined to become the wife of one of the most influential men of the new regime, Basil Morcovici.

At the highest peak of his personal success within the Party, Sebastian again becomes disillusioned and resigns his position, a step that puts him automatically under suspicion and leads, by no very circuitous route, to a series of prison camps. It is while working as a slave laborer that Sebastian completes his final conversion, to a vision of life that is analogous to, if not directly derived from, the vision of the New Testament. From this point on his life becomes even more dangerous; persecuted though he has been in his search for his vision, he is now in a position to become a martyr, for his faith demands converts. Meanwhile a plot directed by Malvolio Leonte, one of Morcovici's rivals in the Party, has seen in Sebastian a chance to topple Morcovici through Valentine and the fact that she is Sebastian's sister. The narrator of *Incognito*, "Dumitriu" himself, has been assigned the task of facilitating Sebastian's martyrdom by exposing his creed and denouncing those who adhere to it, a task which he is reluctant to fulfill but which he fears he may have to carry out, to his own shame, for the sake of self-preservation.

In the votaries of Sebastian's sect the narrator finds his allies, in Valentine, Christian, and Erasmus Ionesco, and in Arthur Zodie, a character whose presence in *Meeting at the Last Judgment* always generates suspicion, but whose evasive acts and language are explained to us in *Incognito* as the ambiguous defenses, like Christ's "render unto Caesar," of a man living in a world whose rulers are hostile to his vision of himself. Unfortunately, such allies are powerless against the machinations of Party members more vicious than they. Malvolio Leonte soon finds his Judas in Leopold, a neurotic cripple. At the end of the book, however,

we do not know what has happened to Sebastian; Morcovici has managed to turn the tide and Sebastian, now no longer a wanted man, has simply disappeared. In fact, whether Sebastian is dead or alive no longer makes much difference, for the conspiracy of soul of which he was the center has given signs of spreading even into the Byzantine cave of Soviet Russia itself.

In Rumania's recent "thaw" towards the West, as represented chiefly for Dumitriu's readers by the release of his daughter, we may perhaps be witnessing the result of some "conspiracy" like Sebastian's, for Dumitriu himself believes the thaw to be genuine and has remarked

further that the people who have created it are the same people who helped put Rumania so firmly behind the Iron Curtain. Regardless of its value, however, as a piece of local prophecy, *Incognito* will remain a considerable work of art, made more considerable by the place it occupies in the total work of a writer who is already recognizably a classic. If Dumitriu has not wholly succeeded in conquering the eternal problem of expressing the experience of religion in words, it must be added that even so *Incognito* dwarfs *Darkness at Noon* and threatens to dwarf *Doctor Zhivago*, the two novels of the twentieth century with which it is most easily compared.

THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS

Type of work: Comic verse

Author: "Thomas Ingoldsby" (The Rev. Richard Harris Barham, 1788-1845)

First published: 1840, 1842; 1847

Principal characters:

THOMAS INGOLDSBY, Gent., editor of the family legends

CHARLES SEAFORTH, in "The Spectre of Tappington"

LORD TOMNODDY, in "The Execution"

SIR RALPH DE SHURLAND, in "Grey Dolphin"

SAINT DUNSTAN

SAINT GENGULPHUS

SAINT ODILLE

SAINT NICHOLAS

SAINT CUTHBERT

SAINT ALOYS

SAINT MEDARD, in their respective "Lays"

"Captain Swing," the symbol of proletarian revolt in England in the 1830's, makes several appearances in Richard Harris Barham's comic verse, always in a contemptible light. The rick-burning associated with the "Captain" may have been abhorred by the poet and his middle-class public as a foreign import of violence, but it was also a sure sign of the depression which closed the decade and the one which followed. A very different sign of the temper of the times was *The Ingoldsby Legends* themselves; they increased the flow of comic verse initiated by Hood and continued by Lear, Carroll, and Gilbert among a host of minor talents

who parodied everything they could lay their hands on and produced comic versions of every familiar object from fox hunting to the history of England. Although the fashion spread to America and the colonies, and lasted into the early decades of this century in *Punch*, it was so much confined to Victorian England as to become a characteristic of that time and place.

The Ingoldsby Legends first appeared in 1837, the year of Victoria's accession, in Richard Bentley's *Miscellany*. This was a new publishing venture, edited by Charles Dickens, which ceased shortly before Barham's death in 1845. The vol-

ume now titled *The Ingoldsby Legends* was largely collected from the *Miscellany* pieces which had previously been published in two series in 1840 and 1842. Apart from a few occasional or sentimental pieces, the legends comprise about fifty long poems and six short stories. The best-known of the latter, "The Spectre of Tappington," initiated the *Legends* and explains in a final note that this is a story or legend of the Ingoldsby family of Tappington Everard in Kent, the family mansion of the Barhams. Later the legends continued to be published under the pseudonym of "Thomas Ingoldsby," who was supposed to have found them in an old oak chest in the manor and who edited them for publication in the *Miscellany*.

Barham's pseudonym was preserved for a time and maintained in his letters from "Thomas Ingoldsby" to Bentley prefacing the two series published in his lifetime; but the pretense must soon have been penetrated. Barham in 1837 was forty-nine and well-known in London ecclesiastical, theatrical, and journalistic circles. For sixteen years he had been a Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral and was now also Vicar of St. Mary Magdalene; he is supposed to have been a model parish parson but it is difficult to see how he combined those duties with editing the *London Chronicle* for a number of years and religiously attending the theater. A minister of the Church of England was obviously in the early nineteenth century a gentleman above all else, and as such he was expected to go out in society and to possess some accomplishments such as the ability to turn out light verse. Barham had already shown such ability in the comic verses and the novel he had published before he began the *Legends* which are now his claim to fame.

Some of the *Legends* are still anthologized, "The Jackdaw of Rheims" being the best-known; but the volume as a whole is likely to become wearisome to the modern reader when read right through. The early Victorians found the work

amusing because the *Legends* are long stories in comic verse ending in a mock moral: they were intended to occupy one's time, to entertain, and to instruct. The peculiar mode evolved by Thomas Hood and developed by Barham, that of comic verse, accounted for the length of the stories (over one thousand lines in some poems) and for the sly humor of the moral conclusion.

A comparison of "The Jackdaw of Rheims" and "The Spectre of Tappington" will fix most of the qualities of the *Legends*. Both deal with the apparently magical disappearance of objects, in the former the Cardinal's turquoise ring, in the latter Charles Seaforth's whole wardrobe of trousers. Many of the *Legends* deal with the disappearance of treasure—"The Lay of the Old Woman Clothed in Grey," for instance—and that the treasure in one case is trousers is typical not only of oddly coy references to a garment that Barham several times says he can only allude to but also of his general tendency to reduce the exotic and rare to homely proportions. In "The Jackdaw of Rheims" the gorgeous procession of "six little Singing-boys" ends as

One little boy more
A napkin bore,
Of the best white diaper, fringed with
pink,
And a Cardinal's Hat mark'd in perma-
nent ink.

In both tales there is a rational explanation for the disappearance. Charles Seaforth, for example, in "The Spectre of Tappington" sleepwalks and buries his own trousers. But the Cardinal's curse apparently causes the return of the ring. More than half the *Legends* deal with medieval superstitions, generally ghosts and witches, some of them a retelling of popular stories, as in "The Lay of St. Dunstan," which recapitulates the tale of the sorcerer's apprentice. Most of the *Legends* return to the past rather than dealing with contemporary events; the largest single group is the "Lays" of

Saints Dunstan, Gengulphus, Odille, Nicholas, Cuthbert, Aloys, and Medard. The prose "Spectre" reads like one of the comic Irish tales of Charles Lever and restricts Barham's fancy by necessitating dialogue and scenes; he prefers to embroider verbally so that the stanza gradually moves away from the object it is describing and sometimes even returns on itself, as in "The Auto-Da-Fe":

And no one, I am sure, will deny it
 who's tried a
 Vile compound they have that's called
Olla Podrida.
 (This, by the by, 's a mere rhyme to
 the eye,
 For in Spanish the *i* is pronounced like
 an *e*,
 And they've not quite our mode of pro-
 nouncing the *d*.
 In Castile, for instance, it's given
 through the teeth,
 And what we call *Madrid* they sound
 more like *Marreeth*.)

The most obvious feature of comic verse is the complexity of rhyme and meter, providing an elaborate surface to the poems that minimizes their content and is sometimes strained in effect, devices that Gilbert, for instance, gradually toned down in the *Bab Ballads* and was able to use effectively in the dramatic context of his operas. The variety of stanza forms reflects the complexity of other devices, but is also used to change the style of a whole poem, as in the ballad quatrains of "St. Medard," or the tone of a poem when some grave matter must unfortunately be introduced. The grave element in these poems often deals with the deaths of foolish women, such as the Maiden in the mock-ballad, "Bloudie Jack of Shrewsberrie," or of wicked strong men, such as Sir Ralph de Shurland in the prose tale, "Grey Dolphin," and is usually made ridiculous.

One of the shortest *Legends* is "The Execution: A Sporting Anecdote," sometimes anthologized under the name of its hero, Lord Tomnoddy, a young man about town who relieves his ennui by

throwing a party for his fellow "sports" to watch a man hang; the party becomes so drunken that all the young men miss the execution, which is described in couplets or triplets without the internal rhyme of the rest of the poem.

In the "Auto-Da-Fe" the mass burning of Jews is described in comic verse:

While similar treatment is forcing out
 hollow moans
 From Aby Ben Lasco and Ikey Ben
 Solomons,
 Whose beards—this a black, that in-
 clining to grizzle—
 Are smoking, and curling, and all in a
 fizzle;
 The King, at the same time, his Dons,
 and his visitors,
 Sit, sporting smiles, like the Holy In-
 quisitors . . .

But the scene is preceded by a long apostrophe of righteous horror at the tradition of the Inquisition and the cruel auto-da-fe, addressed to Seville and couched in trochaic-iambic tetrameter:

Those shouts from human fiends that
 swell,—
 That withering scream,—that frantic
 yell,—
 All, Seville,—all too truly tell
 Thou art a MARVEL—and a HELL!

The tripping meter is almost always anapaestic tetrameter; to prevent monotony and the effect of doggerel the succession of twelve-syllable lines is broken by dimeters in the same measure, generally two to a line to give an internal masculine rhyme which is also used by the line or lines that follow:

But whatever she said, It fill'd him with
 dread,
 And made all his hair stand on end on
 his head. . .

Barham's verse is chiefly remarkable for its rhyme rather than its meter. He can extend the rhyme of a couplet to eight lines; the triple or feminine rhymes he evolves are his most distinctive feature; usually a polysyllable is made to echo a concluding run of monosyllables

or part of another polysyllable which is broken in two. Byron's well-known "intellectual . . . henpecked you all" in *Don Juan* is outdone many times by Barham, as in the following examples, "temper or . . . Emperor," "College, I . . . Acknowledge, I," "in fine a . . . Agrippina," "Rostopchin . . . drop chin," "Apollo, cost . . . holocaust," "condemn none . . . Agamemnon," "dragon he . . . agony," "dupe colour'd . . . pea-soup-colour'd." It was this verbal dexterity which the Victorians loved, and Barham had a long reign in the parlor, schoolroom, and nursery.

Barham's popularity declined because his verbal dexterity is simply verbal dexterity. When one tires of the juggling virtuosity only the tone and content remain, and both may be distasteful to modern audiences, not because of the constant laughing at church ritual ("Father Fothergill brewed an XXX puncheon of holy water") but for the quality of social and racial snobbery expressed in many of the poems. But these faults are not apparent if the *The Ingoldsby Legends* are read as they should be, at intervals and in the context of Victorian verse. They belong in the anthologies.

THE INHERITORS

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Golding (1911-)

Time: The Paleolithic period

Locale: A mountainous, wooded countryside not far from the sea

First published: 1955

Principal characters:

THE PEOPLE

MAL, the old leader

THE OLD WOMAN

HA, the wisest of the younger people

NIL, a young mother

THE NEW ONE, Nil's baby

LOK, the People's clown

FA, a young woman

LIKU, a child

THE OTHERS

MARLAN, the leader, called "the old man"

TUAMI, his successor

VIVANT, Marlan's woman, called "the fat woman"

TANAKIL, a child

The Inheritors, William Golding's second novel, was first published in England in 1955. Like *Lord of the Flies*, *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin*, and *The Spire*, it has a setting remote from our own lives and civilization. In these isolated situations Golding explores man's struggle for survival: the struggle with his fellow men, with his physical environment, and with himself. Although these preoccupations are, in themselves, common to many novels, one of the distinctive features of Golding's work is that

at the opening of each novel his characters are already at their hour of reckoning, or, in other words, of extreme peril.

The success of Golding's approach is achieved by an exercise of great imaginative power and the ability to create an environment of great solidity and reality, so that what has gone before is apparent through implication and the way in which the characters react to their confrontation with fate in terms of their previous experience. For the Neanderthal people of *The Inheritors* the natural,

physical world of tree, mountain, river, and rock is the prime reality; when forces alien to their known world intrude, Golding begins their story.

Each spring Mal has led his small tribe, the last of their kind, from their winter quarters by the sea to a terrace and overhang above a waterfall that is their summer home. The way leads over a river that divides around a rocky island. "The people" fear water and had never considered going to the island. When they discover that the log by which they have always crossed the river has disappeared, they are confused until Mal "pictures" a past time when wise men took the original log and bridged the water with it.

These "pictures" are the people's embryonic thought processes: they serve both as memories and ideas. The pictures are rarely consecutive and fade as soon as the need for them has passed, for they are an instinctual and not a rational function. The people can share their pictures without words or express them in simple sentences.

The people have retained the strong senses of animals, but they have also developed their own human rituals concerned with food, fire, and burial. The Old Woman always carries the fire from the winter to the summer home. When the smells of smoke and woman come to Lok from the island, he is bemused and, tricked by his senses into following the familiar scent, he almost falls into the river. As the rest of the people have not caught the faint scent, Lok cannot communicate his picture, and this second intimation of otherness is forgotten in their eager journey to the security of the overhang. Lok almost recaptures his experience while guarding the people that night, but the "picture" fades before he can recapture it.

The people's failure to retain ideas not relevant to day-to-day life makes their survival impossible when faced with the existence of "the others." Also, and this is one of the main themes of the

novel, their lack of the knowledge of evil inevitably makes them powerless to combat it. When Ha disappears, although the people can tell by the scent that he has encountered another, their emotions are grief at loss rather than abiding fear because people in this simple, distant world understand one another. This simple, moving statement of faith is the pivotal point of the novel. That the remainder of the book proves it false is Mr. Golding's grim assertion that the meek do not inherit the earth.

After Mal's death and Ha's disappearance, Lok is the only surviving adult male; it is his task to seek out the others. These others are true *homo sapiens* with the power of reason, for their senses are reduced, their artifacts far more sophisticated than the people's. They use animal skins for covering, have bows and arrows, canoes, drinking vessels, and crude alcohol. They also know sexual jealousy. However, because they cannot eat the bulbs, slugs, and fungi that sustain the people (who never kill for food) and because hunting early in the year is poor, they are near famine.

When the others capture Liku and the New One on the people's side of the river, Lok hears Liku's screams and tries to reach her. He thus exposes himself to the others' arrows. These weapons merely interest him, although he senses danger when he smells the poison on the barbed heads. Lok's apprehensions of danger are lulled at various times by the others' obvious hunger and by his sympathy for them as they work together.

Finally, only Lok and Fa remain; the old woman was drowned, and Nil slain. Lok rejects Fa's suggestion that they escape and survive (the instinct for the preservation and continuation of life is much stronger in the women, protecting the home and finding food the aims of the men) and insists on trying to rescue Liku and the New One.

The others move their camp from the island to the people's side of the river to hunt for deer. The new camp is made by

a hollow tree where Lok and Fa hide from the others. From this tree the two people witness an incomprehensible day of ritual and night of debauchery including, while Lok sleeps, the killing of Liku.

The only communication between the people and the others had been Liku's growing friendship with Tanakil, a girl of her own age. They are able to exchange names and Liku has fed Tanakil fungus when she was hungry. This deed, together with the others' need for a sacrifice to make their hunting successful, caused them to kill her.

In an attempt to snatch the New One from the camp, Lok becomes separated from Fa and, believing that she is dead, mourns for her. Although he feels that he is the last of his people, his hope is still sustained by the presence of the other, and at that moment he reaches his furthest point of comprehension, which he does not have the power to retain. Fa finds Lok again, but during a last effort to recover the New One before the others could take him upstream with them she is stunned and swept away in the falls. After the final disappearance of Fa and the departure of the others, Lok is alone and his humanity leaves him.

Solitary, Lok reverts to an anthropoid state. In a coda passage before the reversal of viewpoint in the last chapter, the first complete physical description of

one of the people partly explains the others' destructive terror. The only human aspect remaining to Lok is the tears on his face as he lies down to die on Mal's grave.

In the final chapter, the others are named. Tuami, the younger leader, was known to the people, as was Tanakil. The old man is identified as Marlan; the most important woman, who suckles the New One, is Vivani. As Tuami steers the boat toward the open plains away from "the devils," he and all the others are overcome by grief and bitterness and Tuami cries out to ask what else they could have done. These people are now quite human and understandable, their actions against the Neanderthals having been dictated by the twin evils of fear and ignorance. But some grace has gone out of their lives forever; their slow-moving boat is a point of darkness between the light of sky and water.

This sad and serious novel graphically portrays the destructiveness of fear and the horror of ignorance which together destroyed innocence. But in spite of the irony in the bitter fact that the people and the others, could, together, have improved life, the book is not an allegorical plea. Like William Golding's other novels, it is a fable affirming man's will to survive.

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING POLITICAL JUSTICE

Type of work: Political theory

Author: William Godwin (1756-1836)

First published: 1793

In 1793, William Godwin, the first systematic exponent of anarchism, published his *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (its full title: *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*). This three-volume work gives evidence of being strongly influenced by the impulses of the French Revolution and argues that the rational being, man, must

be given complete freedom to exercise his pure reason. All forms of government, being founded on irrational assumptions, are tyrannical and eventually must be eliminated. Because laws have not been produced by wisdom but by greed and fear, they should be replaced by the products of reasonable men's ability to make decisions. Accumulated property is a means of exploitation and, conse-

quently, must be abolished. This last point was, however, modified in a later edition. With its varying degrees of indebtedness to Aristippus, Plato, Rousseau, and Helvétius, and despite its equivocating alterations in the final revision, Godwin's book gave evidence of original thinking and provided generations of revolutionary thinkers with both stimulation and guidance.

Godwin asserts that the general human objective is happiness, that politics, the promotion of individual good is man's most important pursuit, and that the two traditional articles of political liberty have been (1) "security of our persons" and (2) "security of our property." But, Godwin asks, would not a good government "take away all restraints upon the enquiring mind"? The early chapters of the book develop Godwin's view that all through history government has had a corrupting influence, but only because man has not lived up to his potential truthfulness, his ability to see what is evil and what is good. The assumption is that if man will define clearly to himself the genuinely good principles of life, government will improve.

Godwin surveys historically the destructiveness and futility of war, and to emphasize its irrational causes, he quotes at some length from the satire on war in Book II of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. In the present condition punishment is the only means of repressing the violent revolt of the deprived masses. But if government is a subject for discussion, then men might reasonably agree about it some day and see the advantages of freedom and equality.

From these premises Godwin proceeds to demonstrate that, of the three principal causes of moral improvement, both literature and education, though beneficial, have limitations, and that the third cause, political justice, is strong where the first two are weak; that is, in the extent of its operation. When political justice is equally addressed to all, it will impart virtue to all. Since error and injus-

tice tend to destroy themselves, it is doubtful whether they could be perpetuated without governmental support, for government "reverses the genuine propensities of mind, and instead of suffering us to look forward, teaches us to look backward for perfection." To exemplify how political institutions have in the past militated against moral improvement, Godwin points out the destructive passions engendered by the inequality of property, the magnificence accorded to enormous wealth, and the insolence and usurpation of rich persons. Traditionally, both legislation and administration of the law have favored the rich and have repressed the freedom of the poor to stand up to the rich.

Godwin asserts strongly that man's most distinguished and most important characteristic is his perfectability, by which he means not the capacity to become perfect but, rather, the capability of perpetual improvement. Evidences of man's progressive nature are the development of language and the invention of alphabetical writing. Having asserted that all science and all art are capable of further perfection, Godwin asks why the same should not be true of morals and social institutions. On the usefulness of history in this regard, he comments: "Let us look back, that we may profit by the experience of mankind; but let us not look back as if the wisdom of our ancestors was such as to leave no room for future improvements."

The true instruments of moral influence, in Godwin's opinion, are not direct physical causes such as climate but, rather, such concepts as desire and aversion or punishment and reward. Definitely restrictive to moral progress are the institutions or professions which always operate to produce a certain character or stereotype and thus suppress frankness of mind. The example cited by Godwin is the priesthood, which requires that all priests must be alike in their subservience. And Godwin is certain that free men in any country will be "firm, vigor-

ous and spirited in proportion to their freedom," as, conversely, slaves will be "ignorant, servile and unprincipled."

When the magic of the indoctrinated idea is dissolved and the great majority of any society seek true benefits, the struggle need not involve tumult or violence. Indeed, "the effort would be to resist reason, not to obey it." Just views must be infused into the liberally educated, but this process must come about gradually. Man's basic error in politics is the supposition that a change is impracticable, with the result that he does not look forward incessantly to its accomplishment. Men do not choose evil when they see it to be evil. Therefore, once having shaken off an injurious evil, a society will not permit its revival unless its conviction of truth becomes obliterated.

An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice develops a theme which is in close agreement with Thomas Paine's belief that society, being produced by our wants, is a blessing, but that government, necessitated by our wickedness, is at its best a necessary evil. Godwin defines the term *justice* as meaning that the individual should contribute everything in his power to the benefit of the whole, not the concept of all for the state but of each individual for the other individuals. The importance to the general weal must be the only standard, and a benefit conferred upon an individual to the detriment of the society is wrong. Even one's self-preservation must be based on the premise of one's good to the society—to all mankind. An important theme in this book is the propriety of applying more justice in order to ascertain political truth.

Society is bound to do for its members everything that can contribute to their welfare. In Godwin's view, that which most enlarges the mind—virtue and consciousness of independence—contributes most to this welfare. Individuals, for their part, must follow the best knowledge obtainable. Regarding the possibility that a wrong action may result even from the

individual's best intention, Godwin says: "If the disposition by which a man is governed have a systematical tendency to the benefit of his species, he cannot fail to obtain our esteem, however mistaken he may be in his conduct." Virtue is essentially the incessant search for accurate knowledge about utility and right, in which search the exercise of private judgment and the dictates of individual conscience must be accorded primary importance. Since pleasure is to be desired and pain to be avoided, individuals should contribute to the pleasure and benefit of one another and should oppose the despot's power, which is based on indoctrination and is productive of pain.

Moral equality consists in "the propriety of applying one unalterable rule of justice to every case that may arise." Two persons cannot have opposite rights; men really have no rights. Since *rights* can apply only to totally indifferent things (where to sit and the like), and since intelligent man immediately becomes moral man with duties, rights and duties are absolutely exclusive of each other. Although society, composed of individuals, also has no rights, we must, under the present inadequate government, assert some "rights."

Because judgment is founded on evidence, compulsion cannot bring men to uniformity of opinion. Government needs to be perfected away from the concept of compulsion; the insignificant individual must be made free to criticize the august senate. Countries in which decrees instead of arguments are ultimate contain "mere phantoms of men," who give no indication of what men might be if they were entirely free to follow the dictates of conscience and to speak and act as they think. Finally, individual justice—equality and freedom—must be the basis and goal of improvement in government.

Having set forth the underlying principles of his theory, Godwin proceeds to criticize existing society, develop his system of social ethics, and predict conditions of the future. His confidence in the

power of reason gives the book an optimism which has frequently been criticized as unresponsive to the lessons of history. While it is true that his emphasis on necessity (cause and effect viewed as an invariable sequence) is inconsistent with his simultaneous assertion of the efficacy of education, Godwin has been

unfairly criticized for maintaining that enlightened education could rectify the falsity and the ignorance of man's judgments. Such a criticism cannot be fairly administered until after the society has made a concerted effort to educate itself as Godwin proposed.

INVISIBLE MAN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ralph Ellison (1914-)

Time: The late 1930's

Locale: A small city and a Negro college in the South, and New York City

First published: 1952

Principal characters:

THE NAMELESS NARRATOR-HERO

DR. BLEDSOE, the college president

MR. NORTON, a trustee of the college

BROTHER JACK, the leader of the Brotherhood

RINEHART, a racketeer, lover, minister

RAS THE DESTROYER, the leader of the black nationalists

SIBYL, a married white woman

"Keep this colored boy running" is the theme of both Ellison's *Invisible Man* and William Faulkner's *Light in August*. That Faulkner, a Southern white, published his novel in 1932 while Ellison, a Southern Negro, published his in 1952 is a mark of the important but snail-pace progress from one generation to the next. Yet what distinguishes these novels is not the social protest but the profoundly imaginative use of a particular social injustice to dramatize the outrageous situation of all men. And it is here that we can differentiate the writer of the 1930's and the writer of the 1950's. "Keep this colored boy running" suggests a game which, however malicious, is still a game; both writers see life as a mad game, and both seize on the comic dimensions of situations filled with terror. The signal difference between Faulkner and Ellison is that while Faulkner's attitude toward this grotesque and absurd world is one of outrage, Ralph (Waldo) Ellison's is one of comic acceptance.

Invisible Man is narrated by a nameless Negro living in a coal cellar lighted

by 1,369 bulbs. The narrator's background is established in two childhood episodes. First is his brutal initiation into the club world of the Southern white man. Having graduated from high school as valedictorian, he is invited to a gathering of the town's leading citizens to receive a scholarship; but before the award he is mixed into a group of Negro toughs and compelled by the drunken, jeering whites to gaze at a naked blonde, fight a blindfold "battle royal," and grab for coins on an electrified rug. The second episode is a comic introduction to a mad-house world. The boy, now studying at a Negro college, is asked to guide a white trustee through the campus and the neighboring countryside, and they end up at the Golden Day. This is the local roadhouse, where each Saturday a group of disabled Negro veterans are taken for a day of whisky and women. Here the boy and the trustee witness a chaotic orgy, a slapstick but savage rebellion of the inmates against their giant attendant, Supercargo; and they listen to the perceptive ravings of a mad Negro doctor.

The scene at the white man's club ends with the young hero, limp and swollen, enthusiastically delivering again his graduation speech on the social responsibility of the Negro. At the Golden Day, the mad doctor shrewdly observes that the young hero, so dedicated to becoming a leader of his people, has already learned to suppress not only his feelings but his humanity, that he is an invisible, walking personification of negative man. In both scenes Ellison shows great control in moving from an attitude of profound sympathy with his protagonist to one of ridicule, and we see a human victim suddenly turned puppet.

But Ellison does more than satirize the blind self-righteousness of an adolescent. In the white man's club he shows how the boy is forced into the role of the lusty, greedy, violent Negro stereotype; how he is compelled to become a puppet by the white gods who manipulate him; how he is denied his identity—his visibility—by the social forces of the American South. In the Golden Day, which is a transmutation of the white man's club, where the chaos is intensified and expanded, we see that the boy is made a "mechanical man" not just by his blind self-righteousness nor by the white man's injustice, but by an anonymous and generalized authority which the mad doctor sums up in the third person plural pronoun. Now we see that the whole world is governed by wanton powers that make both the Negro and the white man ludicrous puppets. We are now prepared for the novel's conclusion that all men are invisible.

The movement from the white man's club to the Golden Day forms the dominant rhythm of the novel; it is the movement from the local to the universal, from the rational to the grotesque. The hero, expelled from college, leaves his idyllic campus, the comparatively logical South, the relatively simple life of an adolescent for the chaotic adult world, echoing the phrases of Candide as he left the Westphalian castle of his childhood.

But unlike Voltaire, Ellison jettisons his logical style. In an interview printed in *The Paris Review*, Ellison explains how he devised three shifts in style to lead the reader of *Invisible Man* from a world that is intolerable but credible and explainable to one that is totally bewildering. In the South, where the hero tries to fit into an unjust but traditional pattern, the style is naturalistic. In New York, where the hero loses his sense of certainty, the style becomes expressionistic. And when the hero falls from grace in the Brotherhood, his last rational grip on reality, the style turns surrealist. Since the style follows the development of the narrator-hero, it reflects a changing attitude that will finally accommodate and affirm the chaos he encounters.

The Northern city is to the rural South as the Golden Day is to the white man's club. In New York the hero assumes a series of roles: a young man seeking employment, a semi-skilled laborer, the Harlem leader of the Brotherhood, a speaker on women's rights. Blind to the potential of freedom, he is manipulated by an anti-union fanatic, a psychiatrist, a higher official in the Brotherhood, a black nationalist—successive embodiments of the mad doctor's third-person-plural pronoun. The order of events in New York is senseless; it will become meaningful when the hero, like Camus' "stranger," accepts the senseless order as the absurd logic of his life. He is blindly mistaken when he joins the Brotherhood in the belief that history is rational and that human identity and brotherhood can be achieved by a conscious subordination to its logic. But even in his mistake he has advanced beyond the stage where identity equals Negro and where history is limited to the record of his race. And this stage is necessary before he can renounce identity and history altogether, renounce naturalism, determinism, reason, and accept the condition of man as invisible and free.

Before he can accept the outrageous logic of his life he must gain an objective

perspective and see the world as ridiculous, as a mad dream filled with grotesque puppets and clowns. The hero begins to see with new clarity when he is made to wonder what the world and life would be like if history were a gambler, if man were not a creature capable of reason but a madman. He becomes a clown in the madman's game when, in order to escape Ras the Destroyer, the black nationalist, he buys the wide hat and green glasses of the zoot-suiter. Mistaken in his new guise for Rinehart, the chameleon-like racketeer, lover, minister, the hero marvels at the man who can assume such varied roles. When he looks at the world through his green glasses and sees the dark merging of shapes, he realizes that this is the way Rinehart must see life, full of possibilities and boundless. And he sees that freedom is not recognition of necessity alone but recognition of possibility as well. Now we come to understand that Ellison's world is chaotic and threatening, but because there is no order there are infinite possibilities for improvising. Seen through the green glasses the absurd world becomes comic and therefore capable of affirmation.

Rinehart exploits the possibilities of the world but also contributes to its destructiveness, and the hero's final step toward independence will be the rejection of Rinehart. This is accomplished in the most purely comic scene in the novel, where he assumes the role of a Rinehart to gain as mistress a spy into the Brotherhood hierarchy. Here he gets his white girl (the promise of his ritual in the white man's club), a married woman who wants only to be raped by a Negro. However, when duty calls him back to Harlem his first thought is to get Sibyl home safely; he instinctively rejects his Rinehart role.

The scene with Sibyl is full of mistaken identity and pantomime, as the hero tries to evade her fanatic desires; a comic version of the scene in the white man's club, its lines recalling the "battle royal," it leads to a more bitter and hila-

rious version of the Golden Day. The Harlem riot is a re-enactment of the mad veterans' attack on Supercargo, but the figures instead of being madmen are grotesque fantasies in a dream circus. In the description of the looting we see one old woman struggling bowlegged beneath half a cow, and we hear another demand that her husband get only Wilson's bacon. Figures pass in stolen wigs and dress coats, and carry dummy rifles. A huge woman atop a milk cart ladles free beer. A man wearing three hats and several pairs of suspenders leads a group to burn down their rat-infested tenement, ignoring the pleas of a woman about to give birth. Blond mannikins hang from lampposts. Ras the Destroyer, dressed as an Abyssinian chieftain and riding a black charger that had been used the day before to pull a vegetable cart, throws spears at the police.

The hero, running for his life, falls into a coal cellar. In the dark he can recognize that the nightmare circus is reality, and that the joke of the human condition is man's invisibility: the unique self cannot be seen. Now he can renounce all signs of his factitious identities, laughingly accept his ridiculous situation, and prepare to return to the world of light.

There are two insoluble problems in this unusual novel: first, how to develop a hero who until the very end lacks a personality; second, how to make the final affirmation convincing and concrete. If Ellison's hero is shallow, the voice of his narrator is fully developed. If Ellison, as Irving Howe complains, cannot specify the possibilities his hero would find in the world above ground, the narrator does discover and explore a rich range of possibilities in recounting the story of his life from the viewpoint of his final realization. In describing a world where the Negro is kept running, Ellison avoids the narrow view of the protest novel. In describing a world that has long been termed absurd by the Existentialists and to which Faulkner, a more brilliant comic

artist, could only respond with outrage, Ellison establishes a new posture. For in a world where both the blind and the rebellious are turned to puppets, one way to maintain independence—identity—is to *play* the puppet, that is to choose the role of clown. Earl Rovit compares the

form of the novel to the improvisation of a jazz musician. It is also like the improvisation of Harlequin, who could always turn the tables on Authority and who could survive his beatings with a wry smile.

IRISH MELODIES

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Thomas Moore (1779-1852)

First published: 1807-1834; 1835

Few men of letters have been able to write on Thomas Moore without disparaging the financial and social success of his life or the great mass of his work, mostly verse, from which so little of any worth is still remembered except the *Irish Melodies*. The quantity of his work and the ready charm which contributed to his success in London society are largely attributable to the fact that Moore, like many another aspirant from the provinces, had to get on as best he could. Starvation in a garret may be the mark of genius but only posterity can decide between the respective merits of Chatterton and Blake. Moore took no chances; he stuck by the Whigs and forswore his early Republicanism and modulated his Irishness into its most acceptable form in the London drawing room, the real source of political power and hence patronage in Regency England. He sang Irish songs and at the same time gained practically the only claim he has on our memory and affections. The rest of his work fills up that yawning gulf of trivia which kept the publishers of London prosperous, their readers contented, the popular authors wealthy, and the best of contemporary English writers—Shelley, Keats, Blake—out of sight.

Yet Moore was in his way a pioneer. He always claimed to have originated modern Irish poetry, enjoying a personal application of the song which takes its title from the opening words:

Dear Harp of my Country! in darkness
I found thee,
The cold chain of silence hung o'er
thee long,
When proudly, my own Island Harp! I
unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, free-
dom and song!

In the rest of the lyric Moore sums up his subjects—death, love, mirth, and patriotism—and specifies his technique: "wild sweetness." The revolutionary effect of this combination in London when he began the composition of *Irish Melodies* in 1806 (seven years after his arrival there from Dublin) was more noticeable because of the stolidity of the serious verse of the time and popular light verse, to both of which Moore had contributed enough to acquire a lucrative government post in the Bermudas. He left London in 1803 to take up the post, but soon returned and set to work on his *Irish Melodies*, exile from London having apparently sharpened his love for Ireland. The new style of drawing room entertainment Moore often provided in person (he was an accomplished musician) was soon earning him five hundred pounds a year. The lyric was restored to popularity in English literature not by the *Lyrical Ballads* or by Burns or by Blake, all of whom came before Moore, but by the *Irish Melodies*.

Moore had given a sample of his ability to write lyrics to folk tunes in the fee-

bly satirical *Poems Relating to America*, published in 1806: the "Canadian Boat Song" which he heard his "voyageurs" sing as they rowed all the way down the St. Lawrence from Kingston to Montreal. The poems were published in ten parts from 1807 to 1834, words and music, with editions of the words alone appearing from 1820 on. Time has established the concert repertoire selected from the songs: "The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Halls," "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms," "She Is Far from the Land," "'Tis the Last Rose of Summer," "The Minstrel Boy," "Sweet Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well," to which may be added the "Canadian Boat Song" and two later songs, the "Vesper Hymn" and "Oft in the Stilly Night" from *National Airs*, lyrics and arrangements of folk songs from most European countries.

Generally only one of the lyrics is now anthologized as a poem apart from its setting: "The Time I've Lost in Wooing." It shows Moore's abilities to advantage: the rhymes are feminine in the longer lines and in triples (*wooing . . . pursuing . . . undoing*); the shorter lines (none is long) end in masculine rhyme; the alternations give a pleasing variation to the run of the poem; the poem in three stanzas reaches a witty conclusion that echoes the Caroline poets. In the conflict between Wisdom and Beauty the poet's time has been wasted in pursuit of the latter; he knows this but still cannot cease his pursuit:

Poor Wisdom's chance
Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever.

Of the language of the lyrics Edmund Gosse observed that "words of a commonplace character are so strung together as to form poetry easily grasped and enjoyed by the ear." The secret of Moore's original and present popularity lies in providing acceptable poetry for the ear, not for the eye, and since we have largely lost that gift so enjoyed by Elizabethans it is

little wonder that our ears have to be assisted by folk tunes.

In the collected editions of Moore's works the *Irish Melodies* now number one hundred and twenty-five, beginning with "Go Where Glory Waits Thee" and ending with "Silence Is in Our Festal Halls," Moore's elegy for Sir John Stevenson, who wrote the arrangements for the parts. Most of the parts as they were issued contained dedications to patrons from Moore and advertisements from his publisher, Power, to the general public insisting that there were plenty more "airs" in the treasury of Irish folk song for future parts. A certain amount of national feeling is evident in both advertisements and dedications, especially in that to the first part which includes a letter from Moore referring to the Irish reputation for song as "the only talent for which our English neighbors ever deigned to allow us any credit." A more important preface is that to the third part or number. As well as dealing with the age of Irish songs, their resemblance to Scottish song, and the harmonic peculiarities of Irish music, Moore refers to three aspects which in their way sum up much of the *Melodies*: their national feeling; their peculiar mixture of defiance and despondency; and their being lyrics to songs, not poems as such.

On the last point he begs exemption from "the rigors of literary criticism" because he can "answer for their sound with somewhat more confidence than for their sense." This statement is admirably sensible but makes it difficult to discuss the *Irish Melodies* as if they were poems. If Moore's guiding principle was to make them singable, only a singer can argue the point and many a trite phrase and conventional rhyme can be excused on this ground. Moore's other two remarks point to two obvious features in the lyrics. They often begin strongly and fade into resignation at parting, death, the passage of time, the decay of good customs. Where the poems reach a strong conclusion they do so by denying the re-

signed close, generally by appeal to the Divine or to Ireland. The endings to two patriotic poems illustrate the difference: "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old" declines into

Thus, sighing, look through the waves
of time
For the long-faded glories they cover.

On the other hand "Sublime Was the Warning" challenges Irish national aspirations by appealing to the success of Spanish independence after the Napoleonic wars and concludes:

The young spirit of Freedom shall shelter
their grave
Beneath shamrocks of Erin and olives
of Spain.

The Irish quality of the poems is most apparent in their subjects. Some are taken from Irish history; others contain references to Irish legends and customs; but the one thread that runs through the volume is "Erin." Much of the reference to Ireland is a prophecy of longed-for independence; a purely poetic exercise Moore's contemporaries in London must have thought it, but history has realized Moore's longing, and it would be an interesting point to settle how much his songs had to do with maintaining Irish nationalism during the struggles of the nineteenth century—songs like "Where Is the Slave?" "Erin, Oh Erin," "Oh the Shamrock," and the better-known "Minstrel Boy" and "The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Halls." The most curious of these is "As Vanquished Erin," which describes how the Fiend of Discord persists in sending "his shafts of desolation . . .

through all her maddening nation." When Erin asks the "Powers of Good" when this will end, the Demon answers, "Never." This is possibly the truest statement Moore made about Ireland.

The phrase that sums up the quality of the lyrics in the *Irish Melodies* is Moore's "wild sweetness," an unusual and romantic combination of opposites, its Irishness, one may say. But the "sweetness" of the verses is obtained by both technical dexterity (Moore maintains, as he must, the rhythm of the melody in a variety of meters) and a neatness of phrasing that might be called Irish wit were it not that, except in a few light pieces of which "The Time I've Lost in Wooing" is the best, this gift is usually spent on general topics and does not show to advantage:

Love, nursed among pleasures, is faith-
less as they,
But the love born of Sorrow, like Sor-
row, is true.

Much of the "wild" note comes from the subjects of war, chains, heroic death, but also from the ecstasy of the love poems, tinged as they generally are with sadness. Oddly enough it is probably the romantic combination Moore achieved which was responsible for the gradual disfavor into which the *Irish Melodies* fell about the turn of the century, though they are still referred to in Joyce and O'Casey. When the Gaelic Revival and the independence of Eire finally arrived, a more genuine folk song with real Irish lyrics seems to have lessened Moore's popularity and reduced it to the proportions of the man himself, whom Scott once called "a little, very little man."

JEFFERSON AND HAMILTON: THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Type of work: Political history

Author: Claude G. Bowers (1878-1958)

Time: End of the Eighteenth century

Locale: New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Paris, and London

First published: 1925

Principal personages:

GEORGE WASHINGTON

THOMAS JEFFERSON

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

GOVERNEUR MORRIS

JAMES MADISON

ALBERT GALLATIN, a Jeffersonian from Pennsylvania

AARON BURR

MRS. WILLIAM BINGHAM, a social leader of Philadelphia

JOHN JAY, United States Minister to Great Britain

THOMAS PINCKNEY, United States Minister to Great Britain

CHARLES C. PINCKNEY, Jefferson's opponent for the presidency

JOHN ADAMS, a statesman from Massachusetts

The dramatic and picturesque aspects of the birth of the United States are presented in Claude G. Bowers' book about the political struggle of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The surrender at Yorktown ended one phase of the Revolution, only to begin another, a battle of fundamentals of government. Should the new republic develop along aristocratic or democratic lines? Leaders in the conflict were Thomas Jefferson, who believed in the political sense of the common people, and Alexander Hamilton, who did not trust an illiterate people to develop government.

Professor Bowers shows how much more logical Hamilton's distrust was than Jefferson's faith in the common man. Yet because Jefferson was willing to try to organize and discipline not only the independent and individualistic towns but the remote farms and the vast open spaces of the West into a unity, he was able, in spite of the weaknesses and lack of ability of his helpers, to achieve success against a powerful opposition. Hamilton, despite his genius and the unquestioned ability of many in the Federalist Party, failed because he did not understand his countrymen and the spirit of the times.

Though Jefferson's name heads the title, Bowers begins his study with a look at Alexander Hamilton after setting the stage in the capital of New York City, on September 12, 1789, as the Congress was about to meet. As he points out, Hamilton looked the born leader. Though he was not of commanding stat-

ure, he impressed men by the dignity of his bearing. But Hamilton had other qualities: an ability to write clearly and to assemble and present facts to convince an audience and not merely appeal to their emotions. Strangely, Hamilton was most certain of his genius as a military leader, though never given an opportunity to demonstrate it. He was honest and generally a man of integrity, with a capacity for long stretches of concentrated work.

Bowers also points out his flaws. Perhaps his success, despite his humble origin, and the praise given his brilliant youthful efforts had convinced him that he was superior to most people. Therefore he was unable to inspire enthusiastic co-operation. He showed himself opinionated and dictatorial, and his early insults to Jefferson in Cabinet meetings grew out of his feeling that he was really Washington's Prime Minister. Jefferson disliked him as a man, in addition to distrusting his political beliefs.

The first step in the Jefferson contest with Hamilton was taken when James Madison tried in Congress in April, 1790, to force discrimination between the Revolutionary soldiers holding warrants given in payment of wages, and the speculators who had been buying them at a small portion of their value. After the House voted down his motion, it was learned that nearly half of those opposing had been acquiring warrants, confident that they would be redeemed at full value.

This was a set-back for the Jeffersonians, but the public discussion that followed helped defeat by a few votes Hamilton's next proposal that the government assume the debts of the states. Great was the consternation of speculators who had counted on passage of the proposal.

On March 24, 1790, Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State for the United States, had arrived in New York. He was willing to agree to a reconsideration of the Assumption Bill, in return for moving the capital out of New York. But following its transfer to Philadelphia, he rarely agreed again with Hamilton. They clashed over Hamilton's plan to use an excise tax on liquor as means of raising money to pay off the states' debts. But when the Federal machine pushed the bill through, Jefferson, having reached the end of his patience, prepared to challenge the policies and powers of his political opponent.

So far there had been no clash over their basic conflict. That came when Jefferson sent to a Philadelphia printer a copy of Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, with a covering note expressing his delight at this reply to the political heresies of the time. The printer used Jefferson's letter, under his signature as Secretary of State, for the preface to the work. Many Americans, to whom democracy was anathema and republicanism was viewed with cynicism, were enraged that a pamphlet suppressed in England should be reprinted in the United States; but the discussion aroused served Jefferson's purpose and was actually the opening move in the ten-year war between Jefferson and Hamilton.

The Federalists were well organized. The various Chambers of Commerce were like Federalist clubs; the intellectuals mostly championed Hamilton; and the press was generally either for him or indifferent. However, Jefferson believed he could count on the farmers, the ex-soldiers cheated of their war pay, those exasperated by the excise tax, and liberals antagonistic to the aristocratic pose of

those governing them.

Earlier, Jefferson had declared that he would rather have a newspaper without a government than a government without a newspaper. Now he set out to find a journal equivalent to the *Gazette of the United States*, edited by John Fenno to extol the Federalist doctrine. For him Madison turned up Philip Freneau, the "poet of the Revolution," who founded *The National Gazette* in Philadelphia. Soon its bold satire had everybody talking.

Angry, Hamilton made anonymous attacks on Freneau, and the struggle became so violent that President Washington tried to bring peace, but the approaching political campaign, which eventually made Adams president, provided more ammunition for the battles between the Federalists and the Jeffersonians.

The outbreak of the French Revolution helped Jefferson, for his was the popular side. Hamilton's followers, on the other hand, sympathized with the French aristocracy. The beheading of the French monarchs swung the scales. The Federalist war party was able to pass the Alien and Sedition Acts giving the President power to expel dangerous aliens and to punish citizens who defamed the government. Jefferson then won a victory over the Federalists by easing tensions caused by the XYZ Papers. But the final confrontation came on the eve of the election of 1800, in the new capital of Washington.

Most Federalists were scheming to elect Aaron Burr instead of Jefferson. Hamilton was too great a patriot, despite his personal feelings about his rival, to favor Burr, and so he helped make possible the outcome of ten days of balloting, the election of Jefferson to the presidency of the United States.

After that, Hamilton went into isolation. The brilliant party he had created had fallen, as he himself would fall four years later before Burr's pistol. Ex-president Adams, for whom Bowers dis-

plays a lukewarm admiration, returned to Massachusetts. But as Jefferson took his oath of office, there was on the political

scene evidence of the right of the common people to create their own government and make their own laws.

JOHN DRYDEN: THE POET, THE DRAMATIST, THE CRITIC

Type of work: Critical essay

Author: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

First published: 1932

There is always interest in hearing what one great poet has had to say about an important predecessor, or what one dramatist has had to say about another, or what one influential critic thinks of an earlier critic. When T. S. Eliot wrote about John Dryden he spoke with peculiar and noteworthy authority: he was one famous poet-playwright-critic assessing another famous poet-playwright-critic.

There are many parallels between the careers and reputations of Eliot and Dryden. Both are better known for their poetry than for their plays, and both, perhaps, are as well known for their criticism (or will be, as the long-range influence of Eliot becomes clear) as they are for their poetry. Each man discarded the poetic conventions of a previous age, set the tone for an age to come, and dominated the age in which he lived. (Dryden was the great man of English letters during the last quarter of the seventeenth century; Eliot was his counterpart during the second quarter of this century.) And just as Eliot considers Dryden to be even more important for his influence than for his actual work, so too the generation after Eliot is beginning to focus more and more attention on his historical significance—his influence.

This volume consists of three separate but interrelated essays on the poetry, the plays, and the criticism of Dryden. In the first essay, the main point Eliot makes is that Dryden reformed the language by devising a naturally flowing, speaking form of speech in verse instead of an artificial and dead form. It is a misconception to think of his style as artificial. It is likewise a mistake to make too much of

Dryden's debt to his predecessors, for the style was due more to his rebellion against the artificial sounds of the old verse, than to an imitation of it.

In the previous age Donne had also been a reactionary by updating the language, doing away with the conventions of the regular lyric verse of the Elizabethans, and introducing into lyric poetry a conversational flow of normal speech. But by Dryden's time the vitality of Donne's reaction had dissipated and the normal had become false. So it was left to Dryden to restore English verse to normal speech. Dryden's reformation of language, moreover, has been lasting.

Eliot is not primarily concerned in this essay with particular poems of Dryden. Of Dryden's translations he felt only that they aided in forming our present-day language almost as much as did his original poems. Eliot merely mentions the great satires, *MacFlecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*. He lingers briefly over *The Hind and the Panther* and *Religio Laici*, the two poems that kept reason even in verse, observing that in the former, which Eliot considers the greater of the two, political-religious thought is uplifted into poetry for the first and last time. Eliot's only comment on Dryden's lyrics is that, in such poems as "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" and "Alexander's Feast," he perfected the form that was not handled as well by Cowley but which he bequeathed to Gray, Collins, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Tennyson, who used it with skill. Otherwise, we would not have the *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

Although he certainly does not depreciate the poetry, Eliot considers Dryden more important for his influence, particularly on the language, than for his poetry itself. He feels that the reason why Dryden's poetry did influence other poets was the fact that he was not so great as to be unable to influence them. Shakespeare and Milton were greater poets, but because they were greater they were less imitable; they had mimics but not followers. Dryden did not overshadow all followers by being too great; therefore he could influence others. Dryden's influence, in Eliot's view, has been enormous: Dryden felt that the English were without proper speech and so he gave it to them. For this reason no one has dominated English literature for as long or as completely as Dryden.

The least important of the three essays in this volume is that which deals with Dryden as a dramatist, and this is probably a reflection of the fact that Dryden achieved greater success in poetry and criticism than he did in drama. Eliot's main interests in this chapter are, as in the first chapter, Dryden's language and his influence. Eliot wastes little time in dismissing Dryden's comedies. Instead, he gives most of his attention to Dryden's heroic dramas, discussing in turn the plays in blank verse and those in rhymed couplets.

Eliot acknowledges Dryden's skill in blank verse, particularly in *All for Love*, observing that he escaped the sour influence of the final followers of Shakespeare, with their methods of overusing everything to the point of destruction. Dryden accomplished the wonder of re-awakening. Eliot hazards the debatable opinion that blank verse dramatists have written better works when they wrote more in the style of Dryden than in the manner of Shakespeare. And yet, he says, there is not a verse in *All for Love* which carries the conversational tone of any of Dryden's best satires. This effect is accounted for by the fact that blank verse was not easy for him.

The rhymed couplet, on the other hand, is perfectly suited to Dryden's abilities, says Eliot; what Dryden could not do with the couplet simply could not be done, and his couplet is living speech. The main reason is that Dryden knew the limits of the rhymed couplet in creating dramatic effects. If Dryden's use of blank verse was an improvement over that of Shakespeare's imitators, his use of couplets was even more of an improvement, for his firm masculine couplet was better than the feathery Jacobean verse of Fletcher.

The main point Eliot wishes to make in the middle essay is this: although Dryden was not a dramatist in the natural sense, for drama was not a form of literature to which his talents were best suited, and although his plays themselves have but a limited degree of interest, his influence on the history of drama was considerable. This influence was largely negative: he killed off the worn-out Jacobean tradition, substituting for it his own form of heroic play, which was representative of the period.

Dryden's prose writings, says Eliot, are noticeably important in two ways: in the historical development of the style of English prose and in the background of English criticism. The influence of Dryden's prose style on the development of the English language was not, however, "dominant" because his prose influenced prose less than his verse probably did. Nonetheless his prose style is admirable: elegant, urbane, and finely polished. Dryden did not waver in his writing abilities; he kept a wit which overshadowed that of his contemporaries.

But what is chiefly important about Dryden's literary criticism is not the style but the fact that it is the first conscious criticism by an English poet in English on a large scale. English criticism had Dryden as its first master.

Eliot does take exception to some of Dryden's critical pronouncements, referring, for example, to his misunderstanding of the Aristotelian theory of the uni-

ties of time and place as absurd. But he explains that here, and in his strictures upon Shakespeare, Dryden's rigid appeals to authority are the outcome of a sense of form and order in conflict with the disorder of the Elizabethan stage. These, in other words, are limitations imposed upon Dryden by the age in which he lived. What is truly praiseworthy about Dryden is that in him we find an almost perfect balance between creative poet and critic.

In contrast with other great poet-critics, Dryden is what Eliot calls "the *normal* critic." Coleridge could not hold himself to plain criticism but ran into discourses on philosophy and aesthetics.

Wordsworth was engaged in preserving his own practices, and Matthew Arnold was too busy searching for the moral lesson. Dryden's great merit as an influence in criticism is the fact that he stayed within the bounds of critical poetry. Dryden was a "normal critic" in that his only bias is in favor of common sense. In other words, his theories were all aimed at what the poet could intelligently attempt. And, concludes Eliot, Dryden stands, both as poet and critic, for he practiced in his poetry what he preached in his criticism as the great champion of sanity at a time when English poetry and criticism alike were greatly in need of sanity.

JOURNAL OF A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

Type of work: Diary

Author: James Boswell (1740-1795)

First published: 1785

Principal personages:

JAMES BOSWELL, the author, a young Scottish lawyer

SAMUEL JOHNSON, his aging friend, the great essayist, biographer, poet, and critic

LORD AUCHINLECK, Boswell's father, a noted Scottish judge

In August, 1773, James Boswell finally succeeded in persuading his distinguished friend Samuel Johnson to accompany him on a tour of his native Scotland, a country for which the learned Dr. Johnson's scorn was legendary. Boswell kept a detailed journal for most of their journey together, and he published it, in a version edited and revised with the help of the Shakespearian scholar, Edmund Malone, in 1785, as a companion volume to Johnson's own account, the *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, that had appeared in 1775. Boswell's original journal was discovered with many of his other private papers in this century, and the modern reader has the opportunity to peruse a considerably franker account than the one that was first issued to the public.

The *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* is at once a fascinating travelogue, an un-

usually full record of life in the Scottish highlands and on the remote islands of the Hebrides, a character sketch of Johnson, and, like Boswell's other diaries, a mirror of his personal idiosyncracies. Boswell seems especially anxious to show the respect and deference with which his friend was greeted by his countrymen; he wanted to prove to Johnson and to the world that the Scots were indeed capable of being scholars and gentlemen, closely in touch with the world of learning, and, being himself, he naturally felt pride in having the privilege of introducing so great a figure to the professors and noblemen of his homeland.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of Boswell's account lies in the absolute naturalness of both style and content. Discussion of the quality of the food and the beds at every inn along the way is interspersed with Johnson's comments on

whatever volumes of prayers, sermons, or poems he was able to procure and with accounts of long conversations between the scholar and many of his hosts on religion, philosophy, politics, and literature. As the trip went on, Boswell tended to fall farther and farther behind in his account, and throughout the journal he casually tossed in collections of Johnsoniana after having forgotten the specific occasions of many of the doctor's comments. He chose, too, to stop his narrative at intervals to give geographical and historical details.

Boswell is brutally frank, in his unpublished account, about the character of some of their hosts. He is relatively sympathetic when treating the weakness of Donald MacLeod, a young kinsman of the chief of the MacLeod clan of Dunvegan, on the isle of Skye, who took their money to town to have it changed and squandered a portion of it on his own refreshment, much to his later chagrin and shame. The arrogance and lack of hospitality of Sir Alexander Macdonald, whose manners seemed to Boswell entirely out of keeping with his station in life, are treated much more harshly. Boswell gives a particularly amusing account of their visit to the Duke and Duchess of Argyll at Inverary. The duchess refused so much as to acknowledge his presence, because he had opposed her in a celebrated law suit, but both she and her husband welcomed Johnson cordially.

Johnson appears throughout the journal as a man remarkably willing to adapt to circumstances, however uncomfortable they might be; it was Boswell, many years his junior, who was most disturbed by the lack of clean bedding and almost overcome by fright when they ran into a storm as they traveled from one island to another in a small boat. Dr. Johnson teased the young daughters of his hosts, flattered and complimented the elderly ladies, and, for the most part, restrained himself from severely attacking those with whose views he differed violently, especially on such questions as the once

burning issue of the authenticity of James MacPherson's Ossian poems, published, Johnson thought fraudulently, as translations from the Gaelic.

One of the most delightful episodes in the journal is Boswell's description of Johnson's meeting with his father, Lord Auchinleck, a staunch Whig and Presbyterian. Johnson was an equally dogmatic Tory, whose sympathies with the Jacobite cause led him to inquire with great interest about the activities of "Bonny Prince Charlie" when he escaped to Skye after the disastrous battle of Culloden; he was so loyal a member of the Church of England that he read his own prayers throughout most of his trip rather than participate in Presbyterian services. Boswell cautioned Johnson to avoid the controversial topics of politics and religion whenever possible, and the encounter of the two men the young lawyer revered most was, for a time, smooth. But the "collision," as Boswell calls it, finally came. A medal with Oliver Cromwell's portrait on it was the cause, introducing the subject of Charles I and the Tories, with the inevitable results. Boswell discreetly withholds the details of the argument, but he does mention that afterwards his father dubbed Johnson "Ursa Major," the great bear. In spite of their altercation, however, the two aging gentlemen apparently parted on terms of mutual respect, if not of friendship, and Boswell appears well-satisfied at having brought them together.

Boswell's portrait of himself in this account is less revealing than that in the *London Journal*; age had apparently curtailed some of his frankness and unself-consciousness, but even here, in the original diary, though not in the published version, he describes in some detail his spiritual experiences in several of the old ruins he visited, and he records with chagrin how quickly his resolutions for increased temperance and self-control were overcome by the offer of a fresh bowl of punch. His concern for his wife, whom he had left at home in Edinburgh, runs

throughout his pages, and he had what proved to be false premonitions of disasters befalling her and their children. His uxoriousness did not, however, curtail his critical judgments of the various young ladies he and Johnson met on their travels.

Among the most interesting sections of the book for the modern reader are those that describe in detail the daily life of the heads of the various clans that inhabited the western islands. The civilized manners of the MacLeods of Raasay had made their daughters welcome at fashionable gatherings in Edinburgh and London, yet the lords and their young heirs were acquainted with the most menial tasks involved with the running of their estates. The wide reading of many of the Highlanders, especially of the clergymen, and the education of the young

people also surprised the travelers, and Johnson on one occasion presented an arithmetic book to a bright young girl with whose family he had lodged. However, the primitiveness of many of the tenants of the great landholders is presented in sharp contrast to the sophistication of their masters.

The *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, like Boswell's other biographical and autobiographical writings has had and will continue to have great appeal for readers, primarily for the spirit of life that infuses every page. Servants, obscure clergymen, elderly Scotswomen, and youthful lords come to life vividly as do Boswell and Johnson themselves, and the naturalness of Boswell's style makes his work contemporary and fascinating throughout.

A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR

Type of work: Novel

Author: Daniel Defoe (1660?-1731)

Time: 1665

Locale: London, England

First published: 1722

Principal character:

H. F., the narrator, a London saddler

Unlike Defoe's more obviously fictional books and novels, *A Journal of the Plague Year* is rarely read as a whole, though a number of writers, such as Virginia Woolf, testify to its impact. On the other hand, it is more likely than the novels to be anthologized in college compendia of English literature, where its presence is justified not as background material (like Pepys) but either as especially fitted for extraction by its episodic construction or as historically significant. Both grounds are valid and together indicate the nature and worth of the whole work. The book shows on every page more clearly than *Moll Flanders* or the other episodic novels posing as "true accounts," the intricate and slow development of the English novel which at-

tracted writers away from sermons and polemics in the early eighteenth century and established a formal tradition good for some two centuries. Thus when John Drinkwater called Defoe "the founder of the English novel," his justification may be found as much in the *Journal* as in *Robinson Crusoe* or *Roxana*.

The first problem in the development of the novel was to establish a working relationship between fact and fiction; the traditional novel still begins with a factual introduction to assist the "willing suspension of disbelief" so necessary to the novelist's manipulation of material and reader. Defoe's invention was to use a hard core of statistics, tabulated on the pages of the *Journal*, of the weekly death "bills" or returns from the ninety-seven

parishes in the City of London and the sixteen or so in Southwark and outside the city limits; but the tables are disposed artistically throughout the work instead of being appended and are surrounded by further particulars which become more hedged with conditions as Defoe elaborates them. In a very short time the reader is in a region of rumor which Defoe first solemnly reports, then rationally dismisses or qualifies. Rumor is the middle ground between statistics and the imagination, and Defoe is careful to allow us to believe it or not as we wish. We accept such folklore at face value, perhaps, because gossip is more entertaining than truth. Thus the first sentence of the *Journal* does not begin "Once upon a time," but specifies September, 1664, as the date the narrator first heard that the plague had come to Holland for the second year running. The first paragraph then expands with rumors about its place of origin: "they say . . . some said . . . others . . . all agreed."

The subtitle of the *Journal*—"Being Observations or Memorials of the Most Remarkable Occurrences, as well Publick as Private, which happened in London during the last Great Visitation in 1665. Written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London. Never made publick before"—is a bland lie which indicates the second way Defoe encouraged the reader's imagination to work for him: "Observations or Memorials" sufficiently confuses the distinction between what was recorded at the time and what was remembered later. Defoe's sources, beyond the death bills, were not extensive and his memories second-hand, but his imagination was fertile. He carefully controlled and encouraged it by the threefold organization of his *Journal*. Contrary to its title it is not a daily record, and the time references shift from September to August and over the whole summer of the plague. Instead of daily entries Defoe used time references, from September 1664 to December 1665, as ways of beginning and conclusion of his narrative,

ending with the doggerel quatrain which celebrates the narrator's deliverance. Within the work he preserves a gradual movement of the plague from the west to the east parts of the city, ending with a central holocaust; and scattered throughout the work we find his tables of statistics. Neither the geographical, the chronological, nor the numerical progress of the plague is consistently followed. The jumps in geography and time make one want to restore logical order to the work and thereby turn it into a literal "journal," at the same time risking loss of its imaginative qualities.

Defoe's imagination proceeds mechanically but energetically by considering one general topic and its subheadings at a time. Thus we get several pages of increasingly horrific detail about the practices of nurses or a catalogue of various kinds of quacks, fortunetellers, prophets, and necromancers who flourished during that awful summer; the section on women in childbirth, for instance coolly divides their tragedies into those who died in childbirth with and without the plague, and the former are further subdivided into those who died before giving birth, or in the middle of giving birth, or before the cord was cut. Defoe's narrator could see little of these matters for himself, but "they say" and "I heard" fill up the paragraphs one after another until all possible contingencies have been covered.

Defoe's imagination works with three classes of corroborative detail: the quick summary, the brief anecdote, and the extended story, each of which could have supplied him with many more narratives, and did indeed in his *Due Preparations for the Plague* published about the same time in order to catch the same apprehensive market as his *Journal*. The summary paragraph often introduces a series of brief anecdotes but sometimes stands alone, as in his brief recital of the killing of forty thousand dogs and two hundred thousand housecats as a precaution against the spread of the plague. There are many brief anecdotes, such as

the frequently anthologized account of purifying a purse, which exhibit at once the common-sense cautiousness Defoe admires, the honesty of the Londoner, and the current belief that the plague was spread by contaminated air. The longest of the stories, filling about one tenth of the *Journal*, is that of the three men and their company who spent the summer camping in Epping Forest. Defoe tells the story at length to show what happened to Londoners who left the city and retired to places where his narrator could not follow them.

Defoe's subject was epic in scope: ■ great metropolis in the midst of a boom following the Restoration is slowly strangled by a hidden enemy. The size of his subject gives ample scope for the inclusion of all sorts of material, but his handling of it is typically original. Instead of a heroic poem we get the sober account of an average Londoner, a superior type of the real heroes of his book—those from Lord Mayor to beggar who did not abandon their city. The narrator is simply identified by the subscription of "H. F." to the *Journal* (possibly an allusion to Defoe's uncle, Henry Foe) and is described as a saddler engaged in the American trade. This, like all trade and manufacturing, ended with the onslaught of the plague in June, 1665, and left his narrator free to observe the reactions of his townsfolk.

Defoe's choice of narrator serves to control his material by presenting it soberly and thus to press Defoe's own views on the prevention of the plague, as in his saddler's criticism of shutting up the liv-

ing with the sick when one plague victim was found in the house. But the opinions of the narrator seem contradictory in two respects. The first is purely technical; the saddler recommends shutting up one's house at the beginning of the plague but acknowledges that supplies have to be brought in by servants and thus the plague spreads. He shuts up his house and servants but wanders through the streets even to the deathpits (he observes that one in his parish of Aldgate holds eleven hundred and fourteen corpses when full); he must wander in order to write his "journal." Except for a period of three weeks when he is conscripted as an "examiner" he remains an observer and thus uncharacteristic of the energetic and resourceful citizens, the details of whose organization seem practical and whose spirit Defoe lauds during the plague and bewails when it passes as the plague diminishes.

In a second respect the ambivalence of the narrator is more striking: he lauds common sense and courage where he finds it but ascribes to providence the salvation of the city in the despair most felt at the end of September, when deaths numbered over ten thousand weekly. Then, suddenly, the weekly bills showed a dramatic decrease. To whom should go the praise? Defoe has it both ways, as he had done when he solemnly introduced the scandalous history of Moll Flanders as a moral tract. It is this ambivalence which is the true foundation of the English novel, a recital of fictions which rings, and is, essentially true.

THE JOURNAL OF THOREAU

Author: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)
First published: 1906

About Thoreau's *Journal* no single statement is more appropriate than Walt Whitman's words about his own *Leaves of Grass*: "This no book,/Who touches this touches a man." Thoreau began his

journal on October 22, 1837, soon after he had been graduated from Harvard, apparently at the suggestion of Emerson. On the first leaf, Thoreau wrote: "What are you doing now?" he asked. 'Do you

keep a journal?' So I make my first entry to-day." Practically every day thereafter, almost to the time of his death, he entered his thoughts, sometimes long, sometimes brief, but all the essence of the man. In 1857, Thoreau entered the thought: "Is not the poet bound to write his own biography? Is there any other work for him but a good journal? We do not wish to know how his imaginary hero, but how he, the actual hero, lived from day to day." Thoreau's actual hero recorded in his journal "all his joy, his ecstasy." But he tried to keep his perspective and not misdirect his effort. In February 8, 1841, when he was twenty-three years old, he recorded: "My Journal is that of me which would else spill over and run to waste, gleanings from the field which in action I reap. I must not live for it, but in it for the gods."

Because the Journal was so completely the full life of the man, when he came to write his other works he naturally mined his daily recordings for ideas and recollections, which he then amplified and modified to fit his more immediate purpose. Apparently Thoreau never intended to publish his journal as such, for it was a secret and private depository of his thoughts: "'Says I to myself' should be the motto of my journal," he recorded in 1851. Thoreau's family after his death also felt that the Journal was too private to be of public interest. Finally, however, the work was issued in 1906 in fourteen volumes. Though called complete, this version was in fact far short of the total work, which in Thoreau's private recording had reached nearly two million words. At least two other volumes of his early journal were omitted. One has subsequently been published, as *Consciousness in Concord*, edited by Perry Miller. And another volume of Thoreau's early journal, consisting of some 42,000 words, is now in the keeping of the New York Public Library.

Because his journal was a private depository of Thoreau's observations and reactions daily replenished, it ranges

through the full breadth and depth of its author's experience. During the earlier years it quite naturally was filled with Thoreau's naive reactions to life, to the books he was reading, and to his exuberant reactions to the philosophy of Transcendentalism espoused by his mentor Emerson and adopted by himself. Thus we find such entries as the following: "All this worldly wisdom was once the unamiable heresy of some wise man" (July 6, 1840). "We should strengthen, and beautify, and industriously mould our bodies to be fit companions of the soul,—assist them to grow up like trees, and be agreeable and wholesome objects in nature. I think if I had had the disposal of this soul of man, I should have bestowed it sooner on some antelope of the plains than upon this sickly and sluggish body" (January 25, 1841).

Occasionally, the plain good sense and restraint of the young man is overwhelmed by his uncontrolled poetic impulses and he shapes a line or figure more florid than effective: "Nature refuses to sympathize with our sorrow. She seems not to have provided for, but by a thousand contrivances against, it. She has bevelled the margins of the eyelids that the tears may not overflow on the cheek" (July 27, 1841).

Beginning on July 4, 1845, and continuing for two years and two months, Thoreau lived in a hut at Walden Pond. After his return he lived for a year in the Emerson home. After these years Thoreau's mood was one of expansiveness and universalism, stimulated by the air of freedom he breathed in the open country around his native village. The Journal entries reveal his spirit: "I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another. I have no sympathy with the bigotry and ignorance which make transient and partial and puerile distinctions between one man's faith or form of faith and another's,—as Christian and heathen. I pray to be delivered from narrowness, partiality, exaggeration, bigotry. To the philosopher all sects, all nations, are

alike. I like Brahma, Hari, Buddha, the Great Spirit, as well as God" (1850).

The practical Yankee nature never did understand Thoreau. After his death, Thoreau's best friend, Emerson, even deprecated his lack of accomplishment in worldly affairs, lamenting that "instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry-party. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding empires one of these days; but if, at the end of years, it is still only beans!" In Thoreau, however, there ran a wide and strong stream of humor which allowed him to accept without irritation the misunderstanding of his neighbors as long as it allowed him to go his individual way. Often in the *Journal*, as in the famous chapter on "Economy" in *Walden*, he entered his humorous observations in aphoristic understatement, as in "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk" (November 11, 1850).

During the early 1850's Thoreau was reaching the full maturity of his powers. As he more and more balanced his inner strifes and conflicts, he increasingly turned his rapier observations and wit on the disharmonies of the exterior world. He still felt himself undeveloped but his potential great: "Here I am thirty-four years old, and yet my life is almost wholly unexpanded. How much is the germ! There is such an interval between my ideal and the actual in many instances that I may say I am unborn" (July 19, 1851). On another occasion, soon afterwards, he again cautioned himself to exploit himself: "Drain the cup of inspiration to its last dregs. . . . The spring will not last forever" (January 24, 1852). On numerous occasions he lashes out at the injustices of the world, as when he sees a small child, on a cold day, dressed in only one layer of clothes and holey shoes, trudging to school. Tho-

reau's whole nature is revulsed: "This little mass of humanity, this tender gobbet for the fates, cast into a cold world with a torn lichen leaf wrapped about him,—oh, I should rather hear that America's first-born were all slain than that his little fingers and toes should feel cold while I am warm" (January 28, 1852).

One of the great ironies in the history of the appreciation of literary works concerns Thoreau's first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, the outcome of which is wryly entered in his journal. This book had been published in an edition of one thousand copies. On October 28, 1853, Thoreau recorded that 706 copies had been returned to him in a wagon. Of the 294 disposed of by the publisher, some seventy-five had been given away. Of the fate of this literary adventure, Thoreau remarked with great irony: "I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself. Is it not well that the author should behold the fruits of his labor?"

Up to the very last days of his life, Thoreau's attitude continued to clarify and solidify. Though his attitudes became less and less flexible, he never became a hardened cynic. Always he maintained his faith in himself, not with a blind egotism, but with the feeling that he was representative man. As he said in *Walden*, "If I seem to boast more than is becoming, my excuse is that I brag for humanity rather than for myself." As typical man he felt that his story was worth telling, though confided privately in his journal. One of his late entries states: "Wherever men have lived there is a story to be told, and it depends chiefly on the story-teller or historian whether that is interesting or not" (March 18, 1861).

The story Thoreau told in the *Journal* is one of the most intimate and revealing ever recounted in American literature.

JOURNAL TO ELIZA

Type of work: Sentimental diary

Author: Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)

First published: 1904

Principal personages:

YORICK, Sterne's *alter ego*, the writer of the journal

ELIZA DRAPER, the object of his sentimental passion

Laurence Sterne's *Journal to Eliza* has been considered by unsuspecting readers as conclusive evidence that its author was a lachrymose sentimentalist. Yet anyone familiar with *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* will recognize touches of that humorous view of eighteenth century sentimentalism that makes Sterne's novels so appealing.

Sterne was neither a parodist nor a satirist in the usual sense. He seems, in fact, to have enjoyed dramatizing his emotions on numerous occasions, and he could not have created some of his finest fictional scenes without real sensitivity to nuances of feeling. Nevertheless, an ironic humorist always occupied one corner of his mind, ready to appear at any moment to undercut the effect of a particularly touching episode. He was always aware of the ridiculous aspects of human behavior, and he appropriately adopted the name of one of literature's most famous jesters for his *alter ego*. It is as Parson Yorick that he sheds copious tears over the departure of his beloved Eliza and, in *A Sentimental Journey*, invokes her name to protect him from the amorous intrigues that awaited him at every coach station.

The *Journal to Eliza* is not an easy work to analyze; numerous readers have puzzled over its tone. Is it to be considered as an autobiographical document, as a purely literary creation, or as something between the two? Sterne met Eliza Draper, the wife of an employee of the East India Company, in 1767, the year before his death. Extant letters suggest that he fancied himself in love with her, while she regarded him as a friend, but no more. It was not out of character for Sterne to indulge himself in a literary ro-

mance that existed primarily in his imagination. Some of the letters he wrote his wife before their marriage are almost identical to the effusions of his journal, and he later addressed other ladies who struck his fancy in similar terms. Whatever his feelings may have been, Sterne was the same man who was composing the brilliantly witty *A Sentimental Journey* during the last months of his life, and it is difficult to believe that he did not perceive the essential absurdity of some of his outpourings of emotion in the *Journal to Eliza*.

Yorick's diary, which is really an extended letter, begins just after Eliza has left for India with her husband. He has promised his "Bramine" that he will record his activities and his feelings every day, and he begins with extravagant protestation of grief at her departure. Few external events find a place in the journal; Yorick visits friends, travels from London to his country home, and, in the latter part of the book, anticipates a visit from his estranged wife and their daughter, but most of the pages are filled with accounts of the parson's illness and the torments of his sorrowing soul.

His laments over his solitary dinner are typical of the ludicrous sentimentality of the work: "I have just been eating my Chicking, sitting over my repast upon it with Tears—a bitter Sause—Eliza! but I could eat it with no other—when Molly spread the Table Cloath, my heart fainted within me—one solitary plate—one knife—one Glass! O Eliza; 'twas painfully distressing. . . ."

The disjointed phrases, the apostrophes to the absent lady, the potent emotional effects of everyday objects charac-

terize the style of the entire journal. The work abounds in tears from start to finish. Yorick weeps over his dinner, over Eliza's picture, over dreams of her; he joins their friend Mrs. James in lamenting his pale, wan countenance, and he sobs with his maid, Molly, who feelingly comments on how much Mrs. Draper is missed. Sterne is a master of the language of overwrought emotions, and it is not surprising that some readers have taken him completely seriously.

There are, however, clues along the way which suggest that Yorick's laments are not quite what they seem. It is typical that the writer who filled *Tristram Shandy* with bawdy *double entendres* should make much of the fact that Yorick's illness, brought on by grief at Eliza's leaving, has been diagnosed as venereal disease. He protests vehemently "'tis impossible, at least to be that, replied I—for I have had no commerce whatever with the Sex—not even with my wife, added I, these 15 years." This is not the kind of comment one expects to find in a truly "sentimental" work. Yorick's apology for bringing up the subject simply enhances the humor of the situation: "Tis needless to tell Eliza, that nothing but the purest consciousness of Virtue, could have tempted Eliza's friend to have told her this Story—Thou are too good my Eliza to love aught but Virtue—and too discerning not to distinguish the open character, which bears it, from the artful and double one which affects it."

Immediately after this statement Sterne the novelist comes to the fore: "This, by the way, would make no bad anecdote in T. Shandy's Life." Other references to his writing later in the journal provide reassuring intervals of everyday life in the morass of sentiment.

Yorick began his journal in April, and the entries for that month are long and impassioned. Sterne evidently became less interested in his romance in May; the daily comments are briefer and more perfunctory, although there is an occasional burst of emotion: "Laid sleepless all the

night, with thinking of the many dangers and sufferings, my dear Girl! that thou art exposed to—" At the end of the month Yorick records his journey from London to his country cottage, where he nurses himself, fancies Eliza beside him in every picturesque spot in his garden, and daydreams of a sequence of events that would allow them to marry.

The entries for early June initiate a new autobiographical episode that is the chief focus of the rest of the journal. Yorick receives a letter from his daughter announcing that she and her mother, who is throughout the book referred to as Mrs. Sterne, will visit him to discuss financial arrangements to enable them to retire to France permanently. The monetary details, discussed at length, are probably fairly accurate, as is the resentment with which Yorick predicts that the ladies will carry off all his household possessions: "In short I shall be pluck'd bare—all but of your Portrait and Snuff Box and your other dear Presents."

It is, perhaps, significant of Sterne's state of mind that the entries for the month after the receipt of Lydia's letter are much longer and more emotional than those which preceded it. There is considerable discussion of all the happy expression of concern about the forthcoming visit, and one is tempted to speculate that Sterne is using the journal less as a literary game and more as a means of putting his mind at ease. In any case, he seems finally to have grown tired of the project toward the end of the summer. The July entries are fond, but increasingly less frequent, and on August 4 Yorick writes that his family is soon to arrive and that their presence will put an end to his diary. A single paragraph, dated November 1, concludes the work. Mrs. Sterne is to retire to France with an annuity of 300 guineas a year, and Yorick is free to think again of Eliza: "But What can I say,—What can I write—But the Yearnings of heart wasted with looking and wishing for thy Return—Return—Return! my dear Eliza! May heaven smooth the Way

for thee to send thee safely to us, and joy for Ever."

The *Journal to Eliza* has attracted considerable attention as a biographical document, though it is one of somewhat dubious value, and as a work illustrating eighteenth century sentimental writing. Unfortunately, it falls far below *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* in

literary interest; the unceasing protestation of love, grief, and despair must inevitably become monotonous, as Sterne himself seems to have discovered. Readers will continue to turn to the journal for the insights it gives into the author's peculiar genius, but his reputation rests not upon it but on the two novels.

JOURNAL TO STELLA

Type of work: Letters

Author: Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

First published: 1766

The *Journal to Stella* consists of the letters of Jonathan Swift to Esther Johnson. Begun in 1710 and ending in 1713, they mark the long period of separation when Swift was deeply involved in the literary and political affairs of London. Esther Johnson was the woman whom Swift first knew as a child, whom he educated, whom he befriended, and with whom he fell in love. The journal is not, however, in any sense of the word a collection of love letters. The relationship of Swift and Stella was an intellectual one, and the journal is about the ideas and experiences which linked them. It is a great document of life in Augustan London, and of the early life of its author.

The letters are first of all a very detailed picture of Swift's fortunes in the capital. He wrote of his friendships with men such as Harley and St. John, who controlled, for a brief time, the government of the nation. Swift was an adviser and friend to these men, and the journal reveals to what extent he was in their company, how deeply he enjoyed their confidence, and how much they relied on his judgment. It indicates too the exact nature of the day-to-day issues about which they consulted. The central matter was the establishment of a Tory system of government, and of this Swift has a good deal to say. Some of the events mentioned in the letters, in fact, come up in disguised form in the later *Gulliver's Travels*.

Swift was one of the champions of the Tory party, and his considerable powers of satire were often called on for its support. The journal reveals that he was animated by belief in the meaning of Tory principles of government—and by the conviction that he had a good deal to gain personally from his association with that party. Swift devotes a good deal of time to explaining the extent to which he believed he deserved rewards, and he is particular in recording the degree to which his claims were honored. The journal explains to Stella the reasons for the many affairs of state he attended and the conviction, spoken and unspoken, that he ought to have a voice in matters of policy.

The tone of the letters is noticeably ironic. Swift writes of a great many persons and events, but he does not grant them the heavy seriousness and meaningfulness that other men might too easily have given. Consistently throughout these letters is a tone which sets the great and near great in their places. Over and over again Swift describes people and their varied affairs, but he rarely descends to find in either the people or the events anything of particular consequence. One of the refreshing things about the letters is the fact that people with very little other than their aristocratic positions to recommend them are seen through the prismatic insight of a very liberated intelligence. Swift notes that a servant seems

to be drunk and that a lord seems to be stupid. In both cases Swift is habitually insulting, but in both he is also objective. As a memoir this work has distinct advantages over history, for it gives the domestic and mundane side of events that, after all, existed in more than the public dimension.

There is an extraordinary amount of what must be admitted is pure gossip in the journal. This material is present, evidently, for several reasons: it must have pleased the reader; it evidently pleased Swift; and it functions to give a thick social context to the judgments Swift frequently passes on mankind. Swift includes an enormous amount of detail on the private lives of the people among whom he lives and on the methods by which he came by his knowledge of them. Much of it was by word of mouth, although some of it came from the ferociously revelatory newspapers and pamphlets of the time. Swift reveals why certain officers were dismissed from the service (they had dressed a skeleton as the Prime Minister and shot pistols at it); where Richard Steele spent some time unwillingly (in jail for debt); what he thought of certain people attached to the court (they were for the most part idiots). In short, the journal allows the writer to express himself with a good deal of honesty and a certain amount of useful prejudice about the life he is engaged in. To the author of *Gulliver's Travels* such an exposure to the life of the ruling classes was bound to be useful.

One of the greatest themes of this collection of letters is the personal life of the author. He writes often of the hopes he has for his future and of his own estimation of himself. Both were high. The note generally sounded is that of distress as Swift writes of the failure of people and institutions to live up to his conception of their function. He writes of the labyrinthine politics and intrigues of those years and, quite honestly, of his part in some of them.

The journal has a strong element of

tenderness towards its object, Stella. Swift continually reveals the strength of his respect for her and the quality of the emotions she causes in him. The personal note, even in a narrative of affairs of state, is never dropped. Swift uses what he called the "little language" of affection between himself and Stella, the language he first used to her when she was a child. In this language both she and he have nicknames, and he refers to these continually rather than to more formal address. Swift makes plain the depth of his feeling for Esther Johnson in his many allusions to the state of her health (she was not entirely well, and died early) and to the frequency of his thoughts about her. In strong contrast to the coldness with which he treats the characters of the journal is the emotion with which he addresses the recipient. He makes plain the loneliness of separation in his frequent admissions that he prefers her company to all of the power and politics of the capital.

The journal is a kind of testing-ground of Swift's humor, and one of its most consistent characteristics is the satirical attitude it displays towards human pretensions. His account of Addison and Steele in a letter of December, 1710, describes their responses to a favor and ironically points out the pride and sullenness which prevents them from benefiting from a kindness. Like the characters of *Gulliver's Travels*, Book I, they are the victims of "rancour of party." In other letters of the same month he reflects with detached amusement on the changes in position of the social puppet-show. He describes a steward who has become a millionaire, a shopkeeper who has become a soldier, and other changes that have resulted from the caprices of the human will. Even Swift's own party is not spared from the objectivity of his wit. In one letter he reflects coolly on the many promises made to him and on the likelihood of these promises ever being honored. Here, as in his literary works, he makes a strong distinction between

"promise" and "pretence." The constant attitude is that of skepticism.

As a historical document the journal has provided a fund of information on early eighteenth century events. The attempted assassination of Harley in 1711 is one of the most interesting and detailed of Swift's descriptions and is often referred to by historians. Swift begins by noting that he has written a full account of this matter to his superiors in Dublin and that he is trying to establish a true account of an event that would otherwise be distorted by rumor. He gives the particulars of the stabbing of Harley by Antoine de Guiscard, a man apprehended in the act of treason. In a tense, reportorial manner Swift outlines the event, its aftermath, and the probable consequences for national policy—a later essay in the *Examiner* (number 33) goes into the

matter in greater detail, and reveals that the first entry in the *Journal*, hasty but objective, is the basis for the longer study. Other entries in the *Journal* clarify the uneasy relationship between Harley and St. John, the two leaders of the Tory party. These men were both partners and rivals; the letters to Stella have many remarks on the nature of their private and public differences. Swift outlines the many difficulties of their relationship with Queen Anne, as well as other matters having to do with the Whig minority and the very combustible elements of the Tory party itself. In short, the journal accomplishes two major objectives: it gives some idea of the depth and quality of feeling that the famous satirist had for the woman he admired, and it establishes a social context for some of the most important political events of its writer's time.

THE JOURNALS OF ANDRÉ GIDE

Author: André Gide (1869-1951)

First published: *Journal*, 1889-1939, 1939 (*The Journals of André Gide*); *Pages de Journal*, 1939-1942, 1944 (*Extracts from the Journals*, 1939-1942); *Journal*, 1942-1949, 1950; *Deux Interviews imaginaires suivies de Feuilletés*, 1946 (*Dialogues on God*)

André Gide's *Journals*, which he kept over a period of sixty years from 1889 to 1949, are the personal expression of a writer whose intention was to reveal himself explicitly in his works. In the informal *Journal* the reader may apprehend in its complexity Gide's protean personality, which he controlled and utilized in his novels, plays, and essays in accordance with his rigorous ideals of the formal, factitious nature of art. Gide said, however, that he was afraid that his journals would give a false impression of him since he kept them most faithfully during periods of depression when he used them as a sort of discipline, and not during periods of health and happiness when he was absorbed in his work. Be that as it may, the *Journals* touch on numerous aspects of Gide's work, personality and thought; there are explications and elaborations of the great Gidian ideas and themes; rec-

ords of Gide's reading and sometimes comments upon the authors he read in which one may see something of Gide's relationship to other thinkers; anecdotes about the artistic people of the time who were his friends, and often opinions about their work; observations on his travels, his gardening, his piano practice, his daily life, often written with the humor and perspicacity which Gide employed so fruitfully in his other works. As Jean-Paul Sartre said of Gide's work in general, the *Journals* give the reader a sense of the authentic experience of a man in their original multiplicity, the many directions of a mind which both expressed and represented the temper of their time.

Gide's expression of his ideas in the *Journals* reveals how a sensitive mind responded to the ideas that were current during his time and how the artist

effected a synthesis of them through his personality. Gide's life—his background, his culture, his actions, his dilemmas—were in many ways so representative of his society that he has become, as Albert Guerard has observed, a symbolic figure of the modern crisis of individualism.

The Journals are an invaluable document for the study of the development and expression of Gide's individualism. Gide said that his life was dominated by the ideal of being, according to the Gospels, a man "in whom is no guile," to express himself sincerely in his actions, and to reveal himself with the greatest limpidity in his writings. The famous Gidian sincerity ultimately produced the infamous Gidian "immoralism." The account records the progress toward immoralism of an ascetic young Huguenot brought up in the strictest Protestant tradition, a development revealed in his trips to North Africa, a country which came to represent for Gide, in contrast to the austerity of France, a sort of province of *la volupté*, and in his friendship with Oscar Wilde. The Journals also reveal the ways in which Gide's native Protestant bourgeois ethic continued to influence his life and thought. To express the most radical inclinations of his self, Gide often chose the language of religion. In the Journal of 1893, he prays to the Lord to give him the strength to break the confining ethic in which he lived, and he says that he had to impel himself toward pleasure. Gide's individualism and immoralism required not only the open acknowledgment of his pederasty, but the cultivation of the sensual faculties in an effort to induce a state of "receptivity" or "availability" to experience. He made an effort, Gide says in the Journal of 1923, to discover beneath the factitious self formed by society an unspoiled, more "natural" self. But in the same passage he adds that such an effort to achieve the greatest personal sincerity required all the power of his will, and he concludes that he was never more moral than when he had decided to be immoral. As Ramon Fernan-

dez said of Gide's "receptivity," will and reflection themselves make possible, in a cultivated person, an un-willed and un-reflective existence. What in many thinkers would be paradox becomes in Gide, because of the autonomy he attributed to personality, resolution.

The Journals, in statement and in style, often reveal Gide's capacity for entertaining seemingly contradictory forces. Just at the time of his marriage to his cousin, Gide wrote in all sincerity a eulogy of what he called "nomadism," a theory close to the existentialist concept of freedom. Despite his expressed belief that a man should disassociate himself from family, country and personal possessions, Gide said that many of his books were written under the pious influence of his wife. He says also in the Journal of 1923 that he never left Cuverville, his estate in Normandy, without a feeling of heartbreak.

In like manner, Gide never completely repudiated the religion of his childhood, but reinterpreted the Gospels according to his own personal lights. In his journals Gide records his unorthodox views and his dialogue with his Catholic friends, of whom Paul Claudel is the most famous, who feared Gide's peculiar antinomian Christianity. Sin, Gide says in *Numquid et Tu . . .*, part of the Journal written between 1916 and 1919, is what is not done freely. Gide often reveals a Manichean conception of evil, and in the Journal of 1916 he postulates the heretical idea that God is not original, that He is molded through man and will be the end of evolution; but he later modified this concept and said that God is both the creator and the end of creation. In the Journal of 1923, Gide records an interview with Jacques Maritain which succinctly illustrates Gide's opposition to the suppressive authority of orthodox Christianity; in reply to Jacques Maritain's plea that he not publish one of his books on the grounds that the truth it manifested was dangerous, Gide replied that the falsehood that covers the truth is, in a Chris-

tian society, even more dangerous. Gide affirmed his Protestantism in this interview when he said that the Protestant perhaps confuses truth with God instead of believing that truth is but one of the attributes of God. Gide recorded in his journals two instances when he was tempted to take refuge in Catholicism, once in 1906 and again in 1916. But Gide reasserted his individualism on both occasions and maintained this characteristic attitude until the end of his life. Ramon Fernandez attributes to Gide the "scientific spirit" and says that in the choice between security and truth which a man is obliged to make, Gide chose truth and refused to assuage his anguish in the arms of the Church. In the Journal of 1949, in one of the last entries written before his death, Gide still attributed to the body the importance he had given it in his youth; he said that in the identification of the soul and the body he had found harmony and that he could not attempt to subject one to the other as the Christian ideal proposes to do.

Gide, in defining his skepticism, said that his sympathies were neither materialist, cynic, nor epicurean, but rather individualist and particularist in the tradition of Montaigne. Gide, in fact, identified himself with Montaigne to the point of saying that it seemed to him that Montaigne was indeed himself; and Gide's journals are as much a fundamental expression of his personality as the *Essais* were of Montaigne's, both of them attempting in their daily observations to describe the multiple facets of their minds and to discover "*l'etre veritable*." But Gide thought of himself as an artist rather than a philosopher, and by the time he was twenty-five he had formulated his position on this point; what for the philosopher, he said, is skepticism, is for the man of letters a "state of dialogue," a disinterested sympathy, a deep insight into the beliefs and ethics of others. In the Journal of 1923, Gide said that while the state of dialogue is intolerable to many minds because it prevents action, it had

given him equilibrium and harmony since it led him to the work of art.

The Journals accurately record the religious spirit Gide brought to the concept of art, and one can see in the work to what extent Gide's conception of classical style is related to the conservative elements of his personality. Jean Delay says of Gide that the more the man advocated a romantic individualism, the more the artist advocated formal classicism. Art, Gide says in the Journal of 1922, equals prudence, and he criticizes those authors who are said to be fertile merely because they do not know how to suppress. In the most extreme moments of self-abandon, Gide kept one eye open, the eye of the artist. He admitted, in the Journal of 1913, that he expressed his thought in his work in an ironic manner, and that perhaps his belief in art, the "cult" he had made of the work of art, prevented the pure sincerity which he demanded of himself. Of what interest to him, he asked, is any lucidity which is not an aspect of style? But Gide wanted his craft to be so discreet, so mysterious, that it could not be considered as a thing in itself; he wanted no manner but that which his subject required.

The Journals reveal the development of the personal skepticism in the interests of art that Gide maintained throughout his life in his encounters with the supporters of partisan thought, both of the right and of the left. Although Gide rejected his youthful affiliation with the Symbolist group around Mallarmé, he says that he adhered throughout his life to Mallarmé's belief that art partook of the eternal and degraded itself by serving even noble causes. For some time, however, Gide was attracted to Communism, and the Journals provide a record of the development of these sympathies. Gide said in the Journal of 1932 that he had come to wish for the upset of capitalism and of the injustices and lies it entailed, but that Communism should favor the individual. He refused, however, to join the Party and said that art and literature are not

concerned with social questions and must not serve utilitarian ends. In the *Journal* of 1933, he said that "conversion" to Communism, like conversion to Catholicism, entails a renunciation of free enquiry, and that he suspected all orthodoxies. Gide believed that the artist should put his own works in order, and not the world around him.

Although Gide held the position of intellectual distinction in his own time that Jean-Paul Sartre has held since World War II, Gide always refused to be a "*directeur de conscience*." In the *Journal* of 1946 he answered a young man who had addressed him as "*maître*" by telling him not to seek masters, that submission and intellectual security will contribute to the defeat of the spirit, and that only the un-submissive, who are the "salt of the earth," can preserve civilization. Such a passage reflects the contours of Gide's mind and personality which are revealed

in such detail throughout the *Journal*: the lack of nihilism in Gide's thought, the essential quality of ideals that were never revolutionary, his intention, as Germaine Brée has said, to revitalize traditions, and his use of culture to interpret personality rather than to support dogma. Gide's refusal to commit himself and the supremacy he attributed to art occasioned, upon his death, an outburst of criticism from the far right and the far left. Gide has been dismissed as a decadent aesthete or criticized, as by Jean-Paul Sartre, for having the ethic of the "writer-consumer." The *Journals* give the reader the opportunity of judging Gide's capacity to hold his own against his critics.

Written in Gide's elegant and impeccable style, the *Journals* should be read for their intrinsic literary value and interest as well as for their clear expression of Gide's thought and personality.

JOURNALS OF DOROTHY WORDSWORTH

Author: Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855)

First published: 1874; 1889; 1897; 1904

Principal works: *The Alfoxden Journal*, 1798 *et seq*; *Journal of Visit to Hamburg and of Journey from Hamburg to Goslar*, 1798; *The Grasmere Journal*, 1800-1803; *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 1803; *Excursion on the Banks of Ullswater*, 1805; *Excursion up Scawfell Pike*, 1818; *Journal of a Tour on the Continent*, 1820; *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland*, 1822; *Journal of a Tour in the Isle of Man*, 1828

The *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* offer surprising dividends to the reader who turns to them in search of information about the author's famous brother William, for Miss Wordsworth was herself a remarkably sensitive and perceptive observer of man and nature, as well as a gifted prose writer. Her surviving works are of two kinds. She left daily notes about her life at Alfoxden and Grasmere, where she lived with her brother between 1798 and 1803, and about holiday excursions in the Lake Country, Germany, and on the Isle of Man. Working from notes taken on two other trips, she composed long accounts of her tour of Scotland with Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1803

and of her travels on the Continent with her brother, his wife, and several friends in 1820. These journals were written simply for the entertainment of friends, but Dorothy's smooth narrative style and her gift for conveying local color make her pages worthy of comparison with Johnson's and Boswell's more famous accounts of their trip to the western isles of Scotland.

The journals of the years at Alfoxden and Grasmere inevitably have the greatest interest for the modern reader, for they reveal most clearly Dorothy's own personality and her relationship to her poet brother during the years in which he produced many of his finest works. Her

description of her life during this period gives a vivid impression of her as a modest, self-effacing woman who dedicated herself to caring for her family and friends. The dominant force in her life was her passionate affection for William; at times she speaks of him in terms more applicable to a lover than to a brother. She kept house for him until his marriage to Mary Hutchinson, and she remained a beloved member of their household, helping rear several nieces and nephews and caring for the many friends who paid extended visits, among them Thomas De Quincey, Sir Walter Scott, and William Hazlitt.

Dorothy had boundless faith in William Wordsworth's genius, and she took upon herself the task of removing all the inconveniences, distractions, and practical matters that were obstacles in the way of his writing. She spent many evenings copying the poetry he had composed on his daily walks, and she indicates that she sometimes suggested improvements. Comments like these appear on almost every page of her journals: "William composing in the wood in the morning," or, "William worked all the morning at the sheepfold, but in vain," or, "William was afterwards only partly successful in composition."

Her concern for William's health and poetic powers was extended to his friend and colleague, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was an almost constant visitor at Alfoxden and Grasmere. Dorothy and William watched with great distress Coleridge's increasing lassitude, his dependence on opium and alcohol, his despair over his uncongenial marriage that sapped his creativity. Among the saddest of Dorothy's comments are her resigned statements about his work; more than once she notes, "Coleridge had done nothing for the Lyrical Ballads."

Dorothy's aid to William did not end with cooking and copying. She had a fine mind, kept alert by wide reading; she mentions at various times enjoying Henry Fielding's *Amelia*, Boswell's work, Shake-

spere, and the poetry of Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson. She shared her brother's feeling for the natural world. Often, immediately following a prosaic account of a domestic errand, will come a description of a scene she and William enjoyed on an evening walk: "A deep stillness in the thickest part of the wood, undisturbed except by the occasional dropping of the snow from the holly boughs." On another occasion she tells how they first observed the crescent moon, a silvery line, a thready bow, attended by Jupiter and Venus in their palest hues."

Dorothy shared in the early nineteenth century preoccupation with the picturesque; her evaluations of landscapes are reminiscent of the scene in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* in which Henry Tilney instructs young Catherine Morland in the proper way to look at nature: "Catherine was so hopeful a scholar, that when they gained the top of Beechen Cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath, as unworthy to make part of a landscape." Dorothy brands a view from the top of a Lake Country hillside "mildly interesting," and commenting on a seascape she says that "had there been a vessel sailing upon it, a perfect image of delight." Touring the Alps in 1820, she was constantly in search of the sublime or the majestic scene.

Typical, too, of the Romantic frame of mind was her love for the wilder aspects of nature; she disapproved thoroughly of the "improvements" made by eighteenth century landowners who took pride in their formal gardens. She wrote after a visit to an estate near Alfoxden: "Quaint waterfalls about which nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed—ruins, hermitages, etc., etc. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalized trees. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills or carve out the valleys according to our fancy."

The human scene was as fascinating to

Dorothy Wordsworth as the natural world. Her travel journals are filled with accounts of the individuals she met and the places where she stayed; she leaves the reader with an indelible impression of the odors and dirt of more than one inn, and she gives unforgettable descriptions of characters like the small Scottish boy who took Wordsworth to the Falls of Clyde and hid himself like a statue in a niche in the cave there. She had a housewifely interest in family customs, furnishings, and food that make her observations valuable evidence about the lives of the Scottish highlanders.

Typical is her description of the house where she waited to take a ferry across Loch Lomond; there two young girls chattered in Erse as they tried to choose a dress to lend the rain-soaked traveler; two boys played on the floor; an old woman sang doleful Gaelic songs to a fretful baby, with "all our clothes to be dried, dinner prepared and set out for us four strangers, and a second cooking for the family." The setting more than compensated for the poverty and confusion of the place; "the peep out of the open doorplace across the lake made some amends for the want of the long roof and elegant rafters of our boatman's cottage, and all the while the waterfall, which we could not see, was roaring at the end of the hut, which seemed to serve as a sounding board for its noise."

Dorothy's notes on life on the Continent are equally vivid. From her window in Cologne she watched passengers leave a ferry boat: "Peasants, male and female, sheep, and calves—The women hurrying away, with their cargoes of fruit and vegetables, as if eager to be beforehand with the market. . . . Two young ladies trip forward, their dark hair *basketed* round the crown of the head, green bags on their arms—two gentlemen of their party—next a lady with smooth black hair stretched upward from the forehead and

a skull cap at the top like a small dish. The gentry passengers seem to arrange themselves on one side, the peasants on the other:—how much more picturesque the peasants!"

Dorothy had her brother's eye for the striking individual, the man or woman who stood apart from the rest of humanity by strength of character. Like William, she was drawn to the peddlers and beggars who passed by their home. She gives in the *Grasmere Journal* a brief sketch of the old leech gatherer immortalized in Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence": "When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a night-cap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and 'a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children'. All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lives by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell."

Miss Wordsworth made no pretense of being a literary light in her day; none of her writing was meant for publication, and this fact is, in itself, a part of its charm. The journals invite the reader to share in the author's experiences and her feelings, to look at the scenes she found beautiful or sordid, to share in her fascination with all kinds of men and women, rich and poor, young and old. Dorothy Wordsworth will never rank as a major literary figure, but she is, in the pages of her diaries, a delightful companion.

THE JOURNALS OF LEWIS AND CLARK

Type of work: Record of exploration and adventure

Authors: Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809) and William Clark (1770-1838)

First published: *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark to the Sources of the Missouri, Thence Across the Rocky Mountains and Down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean*, 1814

Well before the Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson had realized the need for more knowledge of the vast lands to the west of the settled United States. As early as November, 1802, he had inquired of the Spanish minister the official reaction of his country to a suggested investigating party of Americans passing through the Louisiana Territory (which was then Spanish, though, everyone knew, it was about to be given back to France) up to the source of the Missouri River.

Jefferson's purposes were multiple. In the first place, it was wise, he recognized, for residents of the United States to become more knowledgeable about the vast and largely *terra incognita* that lay westward to the distant sea, especially since this land was claimed by foreign nations who through its use could wreak great damage to the young republic in case of war. In the second place, information about these lands could always be useful. In the third place, although Jefferson played down this side of his purpose, there was a good possibility that much of the rich trade in furs could be wrested from the Canadian monopoly. In the fourth place, there was great concern over the need for that will-o'-the-wisp that had long haunted people on the eastern seaboard impatient to get to the Western Ocean, a water route across the land, with a minimum of portages; Jefferson conjectured that by going up to the mouth of the Missouri travelers could transfer their loads to a river running to the Pacific Ocean with only one portage, and thus cut immensely the time and expense of going around the Cape by sea. In the last place, there was great need to reach the Columbia River and help estab-

lish beyond doubt the authority of the United States on that river basin, the supremacy over which was still in doubt.

With the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson's plans could be put into motion. For his purpose he chose Captain Meriwether Lewis of the First Infantry, who was at that time serving as Jefferson's private secretary. Jefferson's instructions were practically general: "The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, & such principal stream of it, as, by it's course & communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce." Numerous side duties and explorations were also to be undertaken. For his aide, Lewis chose William Clark, the youngest brother of George Rogers Clark, who had seen some Indian fighting. Lewis was twenty-nine years old; Clark was thirty-three.

Each man was to complement the other in the enterprise. Both were experienced as rivermen, though Clark was the better. Clark was an engineer, geographer, and frontiersman, and he had had greater skill at handling delicate negotiations with Indians. Lewis was the diplomat and had been trained in botany, zoology, and celestial observation. Both were highly intelligent. Both were to share equally in the responsibility and command of the expedition. In fact, in few expeditions of this complexity and length have two men worked so harmoniously and helpfully together, each ready and able to fill in the speciality of the other when occasion demanded, as it frequently did. Likewise, seldom have two co-leaders been apparently so free of envy and rivalry in their achievements.

The expedition consisted of the two leaders, fourteen soldiers, "nine young men from Kentucky," plus two French-Canadians engaged as *voyageurs*, an interpreter, a hunter, and a Negro slave named York, owned by Clark. Never did the group consist of more than fifty persons, though the personnel in the lower ranks changed somewhat. The company, which trained during the winter, was camped on the east bank of the Mississippi close to St. Louis when on March 9, 1804, Louisiana was transferred to the United States. The first entries in the Journals are dated in May, 1804.

Journals were kept by various members of the expedition: by both Lewis and Clark, and by various other persons, with great or minimal perseverance. Lewis and Clark tried to make daily entries. Often their experiences had been similar or identical, and frequently the entries are virtually the same. Sometimes they are extended accounts, descriptions, including the flora and fauna, meteorological information, plus much more. At their briefest they are terse statements of the log of the day, the merest outline. Though there are other ways of distinguishing the entries, a notable one is Lewis' greater literacy.

The route of the journey led up the Missouri into what is now North Dakota, then to and across the Rocky Mountains to the Snake River, and from there to the mouth of the Columbia. On the return trip much of the journey led back over territory previously traversed, with an occasional break for needed rest, provisions, or other reasons.

The journey constituted one of the great expeditions of all times. Bernard De Voto hailed it as a trip in daring and with a consequent exaltation equal to the voyage of Columbus. Few discerning people will argue with this praise.

The records kept by Lewis and Clark are remarkable in several ways. They are given in straightforward, practical prose, obviously written by men who had much to do but who were determined to keep

accurate accounts of all happenings. Thus are entered various events, all with equal laconic style, the earth-shaking with the trivial. The result is a detailed recording, the total impact of which reaches the reader more in the total than in the parts. Some sections are tedious and dull; some, had they not been presented in such a matter-of-fact way, would be wildly melodramatic.

One entry by Clark is typical. On Sunday, August 19, 1804, an Indian chief came to camp to have breakfast with the expedition. He begged for a sun glass. His people were all naked, "Covered only with Breech Clouts Blankets or Buffalow Roabes, the flesh Side Painted of Different colours and figures." After haranguing the Indians for a while, the men of the expedition brought out presents and gave some all around, including one "Small Meadel" to one of the chiefs and a "Sertificate to the others of their good intentions." After some confusion about the purpose and value of the certificate, the Indians passed it back to the whites, then asked for it again. At this point they were severely lectured for being more interested in goods than in peace. After further negotiations, the Indians were satisfied, and Clark's entry concludes with telegraphic speed: "those people beged much for Whiskey. Serjeant Floyd is taken verry bad all at once with a Biliose Chorlick we attempt to relieve him without success as yet, he gets worst and we are much allarmed at his Situation, all attention to him."

As the trip to the Pacific had been beset with extraordinary, sometimes fatal, hardships, so too was the return. At the time of supposed departure up the Columbia River many of the men were ill. Also, the Columbia was swollen by floods from heavy storms, the river was whipped by strong winds, and the boats of necessity kept to the Oregon shore in order to avoid the most powerful winds and currents. Adverse conditions were made even more contrary by lack of food and plaguing Indians who seemed to mean the men

harm, though actually the natives were innocent.

One nerve-wracking incident occurred on this return trip. Lewis, after taking a short-cut to the Missouri, had his camp approached at night by Indians. Contrary to experience and seasoned judgment, he himself fell asleep during his watch. The Indians then surprised the party in an attempt to steal their guns and horses. Such adventures were in fact common. From

beginning to end, although they were daily occurrences, want and danger were never far from the explorers. The outcome, however, was successful far beyond the expectations of all who planned and participated in the journey.

Read in their entirety, the Journals do in fact substantiate De Voto's claim that the trip was overwhelmingly successful and the account of it, as told by Lewis and Clark, superb.

KAMONGO

Type of work: Religio-scientific narrative

Author: Homer W. Smith

Time: The 1930's

Locale: A French steamer, the *Dumbea*, journeying through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal

First published: 1932

Principal characters:

JOEL, an American naturalist

THE PADRE, an Anglican priest

This book is the only semi-fictional work of the late Homer W. Smith, at one time chairman of the New York University School of Medicine and a noted physiologist whose major scientific accomplishment was "The Kidney: Structure in Health and Disease." *Kamongo*, though cast in thin fictional form, is not a novel in any conventional sense, and its story is relatively simple. Its two characters are Joel, an American naturalist, and the Padre, an English clergyman who has been stationed at Tanganyika. They strike up an acquaintance aboard the steamer on which both are returning home, and to the priest Joel relates his experiences in catching Kamongo, the lung-fish, at Lake Victoria. The lung-fish is of interest to Joel because it represents an unsuccessful experiment with life in the Devonian Age four hundred million years ago. However, the lung-fish could not survive on land because he had not perfected legs to sustain himself out of water. Consequently, the creature was compelled to remain stuck away in prehistoric mud. Joel's spirited account of

the capture of Kamongo forms the first part of the book, the adventurous and by far the most satisfying part.

The remaining portion of the narrative consists of a debate between the two men. For Joel, the lung-fish represents certain aspects of crowded conditions on earth, with the stronger elements constantly pushing out and even destroying the weaker. The lung-fish could not maintain himself because he could not compete with more robust and vicious creatures. Also, Joel claims, the lung-fish was a product of overspecialization, one too highly individualized to adjust. As for the evolutionary process of which the lung-fish forms some link, Joel cannot find any evidence that it was all upward, and he rejects the Padres' assumption that it brought a quality of divinity to man.

The Padre cannot match Joel, the mechanist, in logic, for he has a layman's awe of the scientist with his impressive array of facts and proofs, and thus he has no ready rebuttal for Joel's claim that the protoplasmic jelly, the complex mass

from which comes the cell of life itself is motivated for existence by nothing but a continuing will to live.

In such a vein the conversation progresses as the ship journeys through the Suez Canal into Port Said for anchorage. The Padre is unable to take a stand upon any moral or religious ground that Joel will allow. Joel even scolds his companion for attempting to seek a purpose in man's life when, as he explains, it is nothing more than a stream that flows on and on; and his own dour comment on the Padre's need to believe that life must have some goal is simply the fact that, like the lung-fish, man will perhaps turn out to be no more than a blind alley in the evolutionary scheme of things.

Kamongo is a debate on science and faith, cast in science-fictional form. Its two characters are not developed in fictional terms or even characterized except in broad general strokes. Generally the story is contained in the extended discussion between the two men, each of whom represents a special point of view in the

issue of scientific doubt and religious belief. The book has some excellent descriptive scenes, and in the account of the ship's passage through the Red Sea and ultimately into the harbor at Port Said there are strong suggestions of Joseph Conrad. However, the author clearly is interested in the colloquy between the two men; and in making the debate so patently one-sided, without allowing the Padre to be a full-voiced exponent of his religious convictions, the author has seriously limited the range of the book. However, one can understand the appeal of the work for an older generation, for in the 1930's people were still attempting to attach moral implications to evolutionary theory. A more disillusioned generation of readers, accustomed to the incredible accomplishments of contemporary science, takes that argument to be merely academic; and Joel's scientific reasoning, from which eloquence is not missing, has for today's reader a slightly archaic and quaint flavor, even though his views carry conviction.

KING HORN

Type of work: Poem

Author: Unknown

Time: Sixth century

Locale: England and Ireland

First transcribed: c. 1225

Principal characters:

HORN, a chivalrous young prince dispossessed of his kingdom

AYLMAR, King of Westernesse

RYMENHILD, his daughter, in love with Horn

QUEEN GODHILD, Horn's mother

ATHULF, his brother

FIKENHILD, Horn's treacherous friend and Rymenhild's suitor

MODI, King of Reynes, Horn's enemy, another suitor for Rymenhild's hand, killed by Horn

THURSTON, an Irish king

BERILD and

HARILD, his sons

REYNILD, King Thurston's daughter

ATHELBRUS, steward to King Aylmar

King Horn is the earliest English metrical romance. The Cambridge manuscript contains 1,530 lines in South Mid-

land dialect of about the year 1225. The rhyming, accentual couplets show influence of Old English verse while attempt-

ing to conform to iambic tetrameter, the newer syllabic form introduced from France. The irregular, often trimeter, couplets are more bent upon telling the involved story than upon excellence of expression.

The story makes use of situations which appear in other romances: the sudden reappearance of a long-absent lover; the ring which identifies him; disguise; and, slightly, the return of a long lost child as an adult. The audience for which it was composed probably contained both women and warriors. To the one, the love motif may well have appealed, to the other, violence. For the twentieth century reader, King Horn has characteristics of both sentimental romance and the epic. The story is popular. There are several later manuscripts, and the return of the lover Horn is the subject of a ballad.

In the early manuscript, Horn, the fairest youth ever born, was bright as glass, white as a flower; his color was rose-red. In no kingdom was his equal. When Horn was fifteen years old, his father, King Murry of Suddene (Isle of Man) was killed by invading Saracens. His mother, Queen Godhild, found refuge under a rock, where she prayed for Horn's safety. Because of Horn's fairness, the Saracens spared him, setting him adrift with his twelve companions, including his brother Athulf and the wicked Fikenhild, on a ship which they expected to sink. The youths landed safely on the shore of Westernesse, where good King Aylmar, receiving them kindly, took an especial liking to Horn. Aylmar's daughter, Rymenhild, was also attracted to Horn and asked the steward, Athelbrus, who had been given charge of Horn's instruction, including harping, to bring him to her room. Disturbed over this command, Athelbrus brought Athulf instead. Mistaking him for Horn, Rymenhild told Athulf that she loved him. When she discovered that Athelbrus had tricked her, she threatened to have him hanged. Athelbrus then brought

Horn to her. Immediately, Rymenhild asked him to marry her. Horn refused, saying that he was a foundling and unworthy. At this rebuff, Rymenhild fell in a swoon. Horn took her in his arms, kissed her, and asked her to have her father make him a knight so that he might marry her.

King Aylmar knighted Horn and permitted him to knight his companions. As soon as Horn was knighted, Rymenhild wanted him to marry her; but Horn said that he must first prove his merit as a knight. Rymenhild gave him a ring engraved with her name. She said that if he looked on this ring and thought of her, he would overcome all enemies. On a handsome black steed, Horn set forth on his quest. He quickly found and slew at least a hundred Saracens. The next day, Rymenhild told him that she had dreamed that a great fish had escaped from her net. The significance of her distressing dream was clear when Fikenhild, envious of Horn, told King Aylmar that Horn was planning to kill him and marry Rymenhild. He said that Horn was at the moment in bed with Rymenhild. This report was false; but Aylmar, rushing into his daughter's chamber, found Horn embracing Rymenhild. The king ordered Horn to leave the castle. Before departing, Horn instructed Athulf to guard Rymenhild. He told Rymenhild that he expected to be back in seven years; however, if he had not returned by that time, she was to take a husband.

Horn went to Ireland where he met two princes, Harild and Berild. He told them that his name was Cutberd. They took him to their father, King Thurston. The time was Christmas. Soon a giant came from heathendom to offer a challenge from paynims who had arrived in the land. One of them offered to fight any three of the Irish knights. The king appointed his sons, Harild and Berild, and Cutberd. Cutberd offered to take the challenger on alone. The champion fought with Cutberd and said that he had encountered only one man who was

his equal, King Murry of Suddene. Shuddering, Horn realized that he faced his father's murderer. He looked on his ring, thought of Rymenhild, and smote the champion through the heart. The paynims turned to run to the boat. Horn and his companions followed and killed them all. Harild and Berild were killed in the fighting. Thurston then offered his daughter Reynild in marriage to Horn and planned to make the young knight heir to the throne. Horn replied that he would serve the king for seven years. At the end of that time, if he wanted his reward, including the princess for his wife, he would ask for it.

Back in Westernesse, Rymenhild had heard nothing of Horn. King Modi of Reynes (Turness in northern Lancashire), Horn's enemy, wanted to marry her. She sent a messenger to find Horn. The messenger succeeded in his mission, but on his return he drowned and was washed up at Rymenhild's door. Horn, meanwhile, asked King Thurston to help him regain Rymenhild. He promised his brother Athulf as husband for Reynild. Thurston gave him a ship. When Horn arrived in Westernesse to find Rymenhild's wedding to King Modi in progress, a palmer told him that the bride wept. Horn changed clothes with the palmer, disguised his features with dirt, and went to the wedding feast where he asked the bride for wine. Rymenhild gave him wine in a bowl as if he were a thirsty beggar. Horn refused, saying that he was a fisherman who had come to see if the net he set seven years ago had taken a

fish. He said that he wanted to drink to Horn from horn. Rymenhild gave him wine in a drinking horn, and Horn dropped in it the ring that Rymenhild had given him. Rymenhild saw the ring and asked if Horn were dead. Horn replied that he died aboard ship after asking him to tell her of his death. Rymenhild threw herself on her bed and prepared to kill herself with the knife that she had hidden there to kill both Modi and herself that night. Horn wiped the dirt from his face and told her that he was Horn, her true lover. Rymenhild ran to tell Athulf, who jumped for joy. Returning to the wedding party with his Irish warriors, Horn killed King Modi and his followers. After convincing King Aylmar that Fikenhild had slandered him, Horn told the king that he would return to Suddene and regain his kingdom, then marry Rymenhild. Horn recovered his kingdom from the Saracens. He found that his mother was still alive.

While Horn was gone, Fikenhild, through bribery and intimidation of the king, was able to carry off Rymenhild to his castle. Warned of this action in a dream, Horn returned to Westernesse where he heard that Fikenhild had married Rymenhild. Disguised as harpers, Horn and his men gained access to Fikenhild's castle. He killed Fikenhild, hacked him to pieces, and rescued Rymenhild. He made Athelbrus, the good steward, King of Reynes in place of Modi. He took Athulf to Ireland to marry Reynild. Then he took Rymenhild to Suddene and there made her his queen.

THE LABYRINTH OF SOLITUDE

Type of work: Sociological essays
Author: Octavio Paz (1914-)
First published: 1950

Widely acknowledged as the greatest poet of contemporary Mexico, Octavio Paz has led a life that in many ways is typical of the Mexican intelligentsia he describes in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.

He has published ten books of poetry, fought with the Loyalists in Spain, and served his country as a diplomat. Deeply involved in the future of the Mexican land, he has fitted himself out for defin-

ing it to the world by a career that includes the experiences of intense action and intenser contemplation.

The Labyrinth of Solitude was first published in 1950 by Jesús Silva Herzog's famous and influential magazine, *Cuadernos Americanos*. The version that comes to North Americans through Ly-sander Kemp's translation is based upon a second edition, revised and expanded, published by the Fondo de Cultura Económica in 1959. This book is in effect the result of labors that span a decade, labors that show themselves best in Paz's mastery of his own implications: the labyrinth he describes is the modern world.

Paz begins with an analysis of the phenomenon of the *pachucos*, those youths of Latin descent who during the 1940's and 1950's alarmed the cities of the Southwest with their "antisocial" behavior, their peculiar dress, and their hostile acts and attitudes. He sees the *pachuco* as standing between Mexican culture and North American culture, in a Limbo, unable to accept the values of either, equally alienated from both. Moreover, says Paz, the *pachuco* has, without understanding them, reasons; for both cultures have cut themselves off from the flux of life, have failed in their separate ways to reconcile man and the universe. Unable to partake of communion, both the Mexican and the North American have thus become spiritual orphans, imprisoned in the sterility of solitude. If the Mexican seclusion is similar to stagnant water, Paz says, North America is similar to a mirror. Neither contains life any more.

The forces that confine the North American are summarized in the three sets of laws to which Paz pays at least lip service: the seventeenth century religious code of Calvin, the eighteenth century political code of the Founding Fathers, and the nineteenth century moral code of the American Victorians. Caged by these sets of laws, the North American has let himself become a cipher, handling the

universe easily by simply denying any part of it that might conflict with these codes. As a man he lives, therefore, in a wholly artificial world, creating his psychological mothers and fathers out of the delusions of his own Panglossism. The Mexican, on the other hand—and here Paz has the support not only of innumerable Mexican observers but also of an informed outsider like Oscar Lewis—has no such delusions, but sees himself more or less clearly in his orphanhood, without a mother and without a father.

For a Mexican, life is a combat in which his role as an isolated individual can only be defensive. To North Americans with some experience of Mexico, the best image for this role is perhaps one that Paz, as a Mexican, is not in an objective position to suggest: the blindfolded child cautiously rushing in, stick raised but head averted, to smash the Christmas *pinata*. Concealing himself behind a mask of reserve, the Mexican is in reality blindfolded, violent, fearful, like such a child, as well as trapped in the lie of his own apparent stoicism. His interior turbulence is a torture, while his exterior defensiveness destroys even the possibility of the communion that might bring him happiness. Hence his world is hollow, self-consuming, masochistic, more or less devoid of love, for what love he knows is merely a form of narcissism. Paz says that the Mexican refuses to progress beyond himself, to free himself, to expose himself to the outside world. If North American happiness exists only in neutralizing illusions, Mexican happiness exists only in remotest theory.

Relief comes to a certain extent with the fiesta, a uniquely Mexican plunge into chaos from which the group emerges purified and strengthened, a drunken rapture during which the individual briefly confronts himself. The fiesta, however, cannot wholly offset the lack of communion; it is too impermanent, short-lived, unstable. The Mexican oscillates between intimacy and withdrawal, shout-

ing and silence, fiesta and wake, without ever surrendering himself to anything but himself. Despite fiestas, the Mexican never really transcends his solitude.

Paz sees this solitude in Mexico as largely the result of the Reform movement which, following so many years after Independence, finally disrupted both the Aztec and Colonial traditions. The new Spanish American nations are not new, he claims. Instead, he views them as static or decadent societies, survivals of older, more integrated cultures. Reform was thus an attempt at social reanimation. Its method, however, was based not upon indigenous realities but rather upon abstract and geometrical reasoning imported from Europe. The profoundest effect of the liberal Constitution of 1857 was therefore the creation of a split between the individual Mexican and the native past which had given him birth. He became inevitably, at the moment of that split, the orphan that he remains.

The Revolution that came after Reform one sees as a movement meant to overcome this orphanhood, to reconquer the past, to assimilate it, and to make it live in the present. Paz finds particular significance in the Zapatistas, whose program to reinstitute the ancient systems of land tenure epitomized the Revolution on its ideological side. The Revolution was above all, however, a "fiesta of bullets," the orgiastic celebration of a total Mexico daring at length to be, and to be in communion with herself.

Mexico's success in maintaining this communion after the shooting ceased has been, for various historical reasons, sharply limited. The essential solitude which Paz describes in his earlier chapters still stands, of course, as tragic as ever, with its accompanying problems. These problems are not merely Mexican; they are universal. In his view the crisis of our time is not the opposition of two great and different cultures but an inward struggle of one civilization that, un-

rivaled, is shaping the future of the whole world. Each man's fate involves mankind. Thus, Mexicans cannot solve their problems as Mexicans, for they are involved in matters that are universal, not merely national.

The existence of "underdeveloped" countries and of totalitarian "socialist" regimes in the twentieth century Paz regards as equally anomalous, equally scandalous, equally symptomatic of the social chaos that is the outward and visible sign of the labyrinth of solitude. Yet all too often an undeveloped country attempting to emerge from its economic prison becomes merely another victim of totalitarianism. The real cure for chaos and sterility, says Paz, must therefore lie in an outgrowing and a rejection of those false divinities that rule the modern world: endless, infinite work and fixed, finite, chronometric time.

Man today pretends he is always wide-awake when he is thinking, but this is not true; usually man's thinking leads him into the nightmare of reason. After the nightmare is over he may realize that he was dreaming, not wide-awake, and that dreams of reason are unbearable. With this in mind he may then close his eyes to dream once more. The only alternative to the continuing frustration of labyrinthine solitude are suicide or some new kind of creative involvement and participation, the exercise of loving imagination in communion with the rest of the world.

The Labyrinth of Solitude is a wise book. Years spent in Paris have not seduced Octavio Paz into succumbing to the pathetic charms still held out by a waning Existentialism. He avoids the promulgation of a doctrine, achieving instead the kind of essential statement that one should expect from a poet. Not only should the book prove stimulating to anyone who thinks at all about the kind of world we live in and what it does to us; it should also provide perhaps the best gloss yet available on Paz's own work,

His great poem, *Piedra de Sol*, for example, which one can read in English versions, embodies to near perfection the sort

of loving and unsolitary imagination for which, in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, he pleads.

THE LADY FOR RANSOM

Type of work: Novel

Author: Alfred Duggan (1903-1964)

Time: The late eleventh century

Locale: The Eastern Roman Empire

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

ROGER FITZODO, a monk telling the tale of his patroness

LADY MATILDA, an ambitious wife, the patroness of Roger

MESSER ROUSSEL DE BALLIOL, her husband

ROGER FITZANCRED, Messer de Balliol's overlord

ROMANUS DIOGENES, Emperor at Constantinople

MICHAEL, his stepson and co-emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire

JOHN DUCAS, rival of the emperor

SULTAN ALP ARSLAN, leader of the Seljuk Turks invading Constantinople

ARTOUCH, another Turkish leader

ALEXIUS COMENUS, heir of the rival house of previous emperors

NICEPHORUS BOTIANTES, a eunuch, emperor after Michael's abdication and poisoner of Messer Roussel

At a time when the historical romance seemed to be degenerating into thrill-seeking, shoddy journalism, or bedroom farce in costume, Alfred Duggan continued to produce works which are historical novels in the true sense of the word. In his books it is not the very pastness of the past that is important, the nostalgic appeal of the far away and long ago, but the realism of his presentation within the limits of his period. He had the ability to create against the background of the past a world so solidly constructed that his novels make ancient Roman or medieval times as real as the present. His men and women live in violent and picturesque periods, but the writer held them true to the experiences which have been common to mankind in all ages.

Partly his success came from his handling of a special point of view. In Duggan's novels there is no looking backward from our own century toward an earlier time, with all the curiosity or condescension which such a glimpse into the past usually involves. Sensitive to the mood of

an age, he refused to let his characters think or feel as they would in a later period. In *The Lady for Ransom*, for example, there is no suggestion of anything in time beyond the spectacle of the great Byzantine civilization tottering to its fall and of the adventures of some Norman mercenaries involved in border wars between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Seljuk Turks.

The connection between these events and the First Crusade is made plain by the narrator, a monk who had been ordered by his abbot to tell the story of his experiences for the instruction of some young knights preparing to set out for the Holy Land under Count Bohemond's banner. The monk had been born Roger fitzOdo, the son of a Greek mother and a Norman smith, in the days when Norman adventurers were carving out principalities for themselves in Lombardy and Sicily. Orphaned during a rebel raid, he found a patroness in rough-mannered but kind-hearted Lady Matilda, wife of Messer Roussel de Balliol, liegeman to

Roger fitzTancred. Messer Roussel is the same valiant "Ursel de Baliol" of the ancient chronicles, believed by some to be the ancestor of the house of the same name among the claimants for the Scottish crown in the time of Robert Bruce.

Messer Roussel was a soldier who followed his overlord without much thought for the future. His wife was more ambitious. For every adventurer in those times there was the example of Duke William, who had seized a kingdom from Saxon Harold at the Battle of Hastings; surely a knight as brave as Messer Roussel was capable of securing some great fief his sons could inherit. When Romanus Diogenes, the new emperor at Constantinople, offered to enlist Messer Roussel and his three hundred mailed horsemen for an expedition against the Turks, Lady Matilda persuaded him that his acceptance would in no way violate his oath to Roger fitzTancred.

The Normans first took part in a campaign against the Patzinaks north of the Danube and then proceeded to Constantinople. There they were instructed in the mysteries of Eastern Roman politics. Romanus Diogenes ruled only as co-emperor with his stepson Michael. Although the house of Ducas held the Empire, its rival was the great house of Comnenus which the Ducases had supplanted. Two strong parties divided the government, the tax party and the war party. Messer Roussel was not a shrewd man, but he understood well enough that Romanus Diogenes needed to win a great victory in the field if he expected to keep his crown. Romanus hoped to rout the Turkish hordes who had broken through the eastern defenses of the Empire and were laying waste the richest cities and lands in Asia Minor.

The great army numbered one hundred thousand, the greatest force in Christendom, when it met the Seljuk Turks under Sultan Alp Arslan at Manzikert in 1071. The Christians had expected easily to chase the Turks back over the rim of the world, but mounted

horsemen in their heavy mail proved no match for the desert tribesmen. By nightfall the host of Romanus Diogenes had been scattered or destroyed, and the emperor had been captured. This battle, one of the decisive events of history, broke the power of the Eastern Roman Empire for once and all. The results would have been even more disastrous if the Turks had followed up their victory, but at the time Alp Arslan was more interested in his war with the Sultan of Egypt than he was in the shattered power of Constantinople.

After the battle Messer Roussel withdrew and occupied the fortified city of Ancyra. There, for a time, he ruled as an independent lord. But when he added Sebaste to his holdings the Emperor Michael became alarmed and sent an army against him. The Normans defeated the Byzantines at the bridge of Zompi. Messer Roussel became involved in political conspiracy once more when he was persuaded to proclaim John Ducas emperor. While the rebel army was camped outside Constantinople, the Turks began to harry the lands he had left undefended, and he was forced to turn back to fight them. Artouch, a Turkish leader, defeated him and took four hundred prisoners at Mount Sophon.

Lady Matilda paid their ransom with the booty of earlier campaigns, but from that time on Messer Roussel was a broken man; and the troops would have disbanded if it had not been for his wife's example. She and Roger fitzOdo led the survivors back to Amasia. There matters went badly for Messer Roussel. Betrayed by the Turks, he was given as a hostage to Alexius Comnenus. He was not blinded, however, as he had expected, but was dealt with humanely in his prison. Emperor Michael and his advisers were prudent enough to foresee a possible use for Messer Roussel's services in the future.

So it turned out. When rebellion broke out in Thrace in 1077, Messer Roussel was released and put in charge of the

city's defenses. He marched against the enemy and had occupied Athrya when word reached him that the Emperor Michael had abdicated and that Nicephorus Botiantes ruled in his place. Not knowing what to expect, Messer Roussel withdrew his small force to Selymbria. There the treacherous eunuch, Nicephorus, also a fugitive, poisoned him. Roger fitzOdo says at the end that if Messer Roussel had possessed half his wife's wisdom and resolution, a decent Frankish state might have been founded, thus keeping the Turks from the Bosphorus. Messer Roussel, he says, was indeed a gallant knight, but it takes more than mere courage to rule the East.

Alfred Duggan drew no parallels and pointed no moral. He simply re-created a picture of an age and its people, the violent, brutal, treacherous, yet strangely idealistic world of the Middle Ages, still

pagan under its Christian beliefs, ignorant of its directions, cut off from its past. At the same time the human element rings true, sometimes with a sly, pawky humor, as when Lady Matilda advises her husband that it is always best to take an honorable course, especially if one does not lose by it; or when Roger fitzOdo, praises his master as a man who was capable of facing martyrdom even though he was a sinner, for he had been baptized and was never a deserter. Alfred Duggan also stayed close to actual facts. It is true that his story brings together imagination and history, but he wrote for the most part of real people, letting fancy take over only when recorded history supplies no answer to the motives or the plights of his characters in their far-off age of dimming splendor and resurgent barbarism.

LE LAIS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: François Villon (1431-after 1463)

First transcribed: Written at, or shortly after, Christmas 1456; doubtless circulated in manuscript, the *Lais* (*Legacy*) was first edited with Villon's other poetry in 1489: *Le grand testament Villon et le petit. Son codicille. Le jargon et ses balades*, 1489

François Villon's *Lais* (the "Little Testament" of early editors) is a youthful poem of bequests, ironic, equivocal, made to a very mixed group of acquaintances and enemies, whom the poet singled out for high-spirited mockery, sarcasm, insulting "gauloiserie" and spiteful attack because of their hostility or uncharitableness towards him. Each bequest fits its recipient's position in society, or his weaknesses, or his treatment of the "povre Villon." The difficulties of such a poem, written for the poet and his intimate friends, are obvious. However, it introduces the reader to the Villonesque manner and prepares him for the poet's greater work.

Longnon and Vitu's independent research into the archives and police records of Paris provided a major break-

through in the understanding of Villon's allusions, and consequently of the poet's tone and manner. Yet we are still far from grasping all the innuendoes of the *Lais*, nor can we be certain precisely when and why the poem was written. Almost certainly it was written shortly after Villon participated in a robbery of the Collège de Navarre at Christmas, 1456, his first grave, deliberate criminal act. Villon was then twenty-five, a maître-ès-arts of the University thanks to his foster father, the canon Guillaume Villon, had had a profitable career in the church open to him, and knew influential men, such as Robert d'Estouteville, Provost of Paris. Yet he, no victim of society, if not a member of an organized band of criminals, at least chose to associate freely with the riff-raff of town and gown.

The *Lais* consists of forty eight-line stanzas of supple octosyllabic verse, rhyming alternately. The first eight stanzas tell us, in a parody of the courtly manner of an Alain Chartier or a Charles d'Orleans, that Villon, the "amant martir" of a treacherous mistress, has decided "Sur le Noel" of the year 1456 to escape the dangers of his "amoureuse prison" and leave Paris for Angers. At least in part the reason for his leaving, the girl becomes a butt of ridicule on two levels. To the ironic mockery of the courtly parody, she being no more a "lady" than he an "amant martir," Villon manages to add (Stanza IV) obscenity in a contrasting colloquialism:

Et se j'ay prins en ma faveur
Ces doux regars et beaux semblans
De tres decevante saveur
Me trespassans jusque aux flans,
Bien ilz ont vers moy les piez blans
Et me faillent au grant besoing.
Planter me fault autres complans
Et frapper en ung autre coing.

("And if I interpreted favourably those sweet looks and fair appearances, most deceptive in taste, which pierce me to the quick, I've had no change out of them, and they fail me in my greatest need. I'll have to sew my seed in other plots, go strike my coins in another mould.")

The uncertainty of the journey and of his return lead Villon to the formal establishment of the bequests, which take up the next twenty-six stanzas. Thirty-one individuals appear in the will: Guillaume Villon, the cruel mistress, representatives, high and low of the *Parlement*, the Law and the Châtelet prison, the Church, the nobility, the merchant and professional classes, the world of finance. Seven bequests are made to groups such as the sergeants of the guard, the Mendicants, the *Filles Dieu*, *Beguines*, *Carmes*, the hospitals.

In Line 51, Villon speaks of his "povre sens"; in Line 316, he describes himself in self-denigrating terms: "Qui ne men-jue figue ne date/Sec et noir comme escouvillon" ("who eats no figs nor

dates,/Dry and black as a flue-brush"). This sense of poverty, physical and spiritual, a major theme of Villon's masterpiece, the *Testament*, here, incipient, muted in the high-spirited *Lais*, gives significance to the order of bequests. Following Guillaume and Villon's mistress, the next six victims are all rich men. They are never far from his thoughts, reappearing in Stanzas XXV to XXIX and at the end of the poem, Stanzas XXIII to XXXIV.

Villon's is a mercurial, though penetrating, mind whose thoughts follow one upon another in a kind of free association of ideas. Within Stanza XII, for example, his thoughts pass from Saint-Amant, a rich financier, to the Carmelites, hated order of Mendicants, quite possibly because Saint-Amant's wife "Me mist ou renc de cayement" treated him as a "mendicant," a beggar. One can speak of the unity of the *Lais*, but it is one of spite, psychological rather than logical.

A discussion of each bequest being inappropriate in brief space, a number of random examples must suffice to illustrate Villon's poetic manner. The irony of antiphrasis is at the very heart of his style. His last words on his mistress were "Mais Dieu luy en face mercy!" ("May God be merciful to her!"), The celebrated "trois petis enfans tous nus" ("three little naked children"), Stanzas XXV, XXVI, object of the Romantics' pity, were three of the wealthiest men in Paris. Villon similarly mocks Guillaume Cotin and Thibault de Victry:

Deux povres clers, parlans latin,
Paisibles enfans, sans estry,
Humbles, bien chantans au lectry;
Je leur laisse cens recevoir
Sur la maison Guillot Gueldry,
En attendant de mieulx avoir.

("Two poor priests who know their Latin, peaceful children, never squabbling, humble, fine singers at the lectern; I leave them receipt of revenue from the Guillot Gueldry house, until something better comes along.")

The biographical difficulties of the *Lais* for the modern reader are well illustrated by this bequest to the two rich, ignorant, quarrelsome, land-owning canons of Notre-Dame: rent from a ruined house whose tenant was bankrupt, until death overtakes them. The reader may refer to the *Commentaires et Notes* of Louis Thuasne's critical edition of Villon for a two-page discussion of the implications of this stanza.

The irony of giving what he does not have, or even of taking what he cannot hope to be given, appears often in Villon's *Lais*. Playing at "grand seigneur" in Stanza IX, he gave his foster-father, along with his reputation, "Mes tentes et mon pavillon" ("My tents and my pavilion"). Of his own relatives, quick to disown him, he wrote, bitterly:

On ne doit trop prendre des siens
Ne son amy trop surquerir.

("One ought not to take too much from one's relatives, nor request overmuch of one's friends.") Ambiguity is similarly fundamental to Villon's manner. Although he attacks with mockery, he proceeds with caution, perhaps the caution of an individual who feels himself to be on the periphery of society. We may recall that in January of 1456, on a plea of self-defense, he had obtained two letters of remission for the murder of Sermoise, one under the name "François de Montcorbier" (his name by birth), the other under "François des Loges, autrement dit de Villon." Equivocations, sometimes multiple, are therefore common in the *Lais* (the title itself is ambiguous, Legacy or Lay). Stanza XXIV contains simple examples:

Item, au Loup et a Cholet
Je laisse a la fois ung canart
Prins sur les murs, comme on souloit,
Envers les fossez, sur le tart,
Et a chascun ung grant tabart
De cordelier jusques aux piez,
Busche, charbon et poix au lart,
Et mes houseaulx sans avantpiez.

(Item, to Loup and to Cholet between them, I leave a duck caught in the usual way (or as we used to catch them), by the walls, over against the ditches, at dusk. And to each a great full-length friar's cloak, wood, charcoal, pork and peas; and my leggings without toe-caps.) In this picturesque thumb-nail sketch of the two poaching ditch-diggers (Villon included?—"comme on souloit") who became sergeants at the Châtelet prison, Villon seems to play on the colloquial expression "donner un canard"—"a gift of that which the giver cannot keep" as Cotgrave defines it in his *Dictionnaire of the French and English Tongues*. The "tabart" is to be used here to conceal the theft; the "houseaulx sans avantpiez" would be useless to watermen, but also possess an erotic connotation. In connection with Villon's obscenities and "gauloiserie" it might be remembered that he is simply using the language of his time, a language not shunned by contemporary preachers.

The *Lais* is not rich in imagery. In it Villon is not, as in the *Testament*, attempting to explain his own misfortune and, by extension, that of others like him. Nevertheless, the image of thirst, which recurs in the *Testament* and seems to be associated with the poet's misfortune, does appear in the *Lais*. Villon describes himself as "plus alteré d'umeur" than a "soret de Boulonge" ("More dried up than a Boulogne red herring"); he is "Sec et noir comme escouvillon." Black and white appear in his images but colors do not. For all the allusions to details of Parisian life in the fifteenth century, there are no "tableaux" of the streets and taverns so familiar to the poet. The conscious, elliptical, concentrated nature of Villon's poetry gives rise to its vividness and reflects the poet's way of thought:

Item, je laisse aux hospitaux
Mes chassiz tissus d'arignee,
Et aux gisans soubz les estaux,
Chascun sur l'oeil une grongniee,
Trembler a chiere renfrongniee,

Megres, velus et morfondus,
Chausses courtes, robe rongniee,
Gelez, murdris et enfondus.

("Item, I leave to the hospitals my windows hung with spiders' webs, to those lying under the market stalls, a punch in the eye, (I give them leave) to shiver with pinched faces, lean, tousled, chilled, bare-kneed and in tattered cloak, frozen, bruised, soaked to the bone.")

This stanza illustrates too some of the extremely rich, youthfully exuberant rhymes of the farcical *Lais* in contrast with the rhymes of the mature, introspective *Testament*.

The *Lais* closes with five enigmatic stanzas in which Villon, hearing the evening Angelus rung by the bell of the Sorbonne, stops to pray, falls into a mysterious state of semi-consciousness:

Ce faisant, je m'entroublié,
Non pas par force de vin boire,
Mon esperit comme lié;
Lors je sentis dame Memoire
Reprendre et mettre en son aumoire
Ses especes collaterales,
Oppinative faulce et voire,
Et autres intellectuelles,

("So doing, I become confused, not from drinking wine, my mind being seemingly paralysed; then I felt Dame Memory take back and put into her store-house the faculties subject to her: opinative, false and true, and the other faculties of the intellect.")

As this obvious parody of scholastic jargon continues, the poet's reason ceases to function, giving way to the organs of feeling, aroused by the imagination. His will, the "souveraine partie," is kept in a state of suspension, deadened. Such is the recent interpretation of this passage by André Burger. Recovering from this "entroubli" (likened to drunkenness, Line 282; to the madness of a lunatic, Line 294), the poet wishes to return to the bequests, but finds his ink frozen, his candle burned out, and so he goes to sleep, wrapped up against the cold night:

Mais mon ancre trouvé gelé
Et mon cierge trouvé soufflé;
De feu je n'ausse peu finer;
Si m'endormis, tout enmoufflé,
Et ne peux autrement finer.

Burger's thesis is that the "entroubli" refers to the hours of the Collège de Navarre robbery, in which Villon was not an enthusiastic participant. But he needed the money to go to Angers, to René d'Anjou, hopefully as court poet, shaking off his criminal friends. Villon's last words are that he has but "ung peu de billon" left.

Villon's originality lies in the fact of his having written of lived experience, of his having achieved, in the *Testament*, a universal compassion through attempts to explain his own misfortunes. For all its complexity, the *Lais* reflects the same kind of lived experience.

THE LAIS OF MARIE DE FRANCE

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Marie de France (fl. late twelfth century)

First transcribed: c. 1175

Critique:

Marie de France composed verse romances in French with some English words around the year 1175. She may have been either French or English, and she may have written at the court of Henry II of England, whose wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, encouraged writers.

With a light, sure style Marie tells her tales of magic and courtly love, her Breton *lais*. She gives her name in "The Lay of Gugemar." Here and elsewhere in the poems, she mentions the care with which she chooses her words and her awareness of the excellence of brevity.

Her skill saves her delicate verse romances from the level of the merely sentimental or the sensational. Usually, the heroine is an unfaithful wife faithful to her lover; the hero her lover; the villain the old, jealous husband. To Marie, love is far more spiritual and binding than marriage. To her characters, developed so slightly as hardly to deserve such designation, love is swift, overpowering, and enduring. It is usually adulterous, at best illicit. Her stories are fleet, their endings inexorable. Sometimes, as in "The Lay of Equitan," there is a moral stated. Violence, love's partner, is the dark shadow and part of the substance of the stories.

The Stories:

THE LAY OF GUGEMAR

In the days of King Arthur, Gugemar, a knight who loved no lady, was injured by an arrow with which he had shot a white doe. In human speech, the doe told Gugemar that he would have no relief from his hurt until he found a woman who would suffer as never woman did before and for whom he will suffer as well. Binding his wound with the hem of his shirt, Gugemar boarded an empty ship which he found in the harbor. He fell asleep and awakened in another land where he had been discovered by the queen, a young woman kept as a prisoner by her old lord. The queen took him home, concealed him, healed him; the two become lovers. They lived happily for a year and a half. As tokens of their love, the queen tied a knot in the hem of Gugemar's shirt which only she could untie and Gugemar fastened a girdle about the queen's waist which only he could unbuckle. They pledged that they would never take another love who could not unfasten the knot or buckle.

When the king discovered Gugemar, he allowed him to leave on the ship in the hope that it would wreck. He threw the queen in a tower where she stayed for two years. One day, finding the door unlocked, she went to the harbor and onto

the empty vessel which carried her to the shore of a warlike prince, Meriadus, who lodged her with his unmarried sister and tried to win her love. Because he could not loose the buckle, he brought to her a knight who had a mysterious knot tied in his shirt. The knight was Gugemar. After the knot and buckle had been loosed, Gugemar wanted to take the queen away, but Meriadus would not let her go. Gugemar joined forces with Meriadus' enemy. They laid siege to the castle, captured it when its defenders became weak with hunger, burned the fortress, and killed Meriadus. The lovers then departed in triumph.

THE LAY OF THE DOLOROUS KNIGHT

In Nantes in Brittany, a beautiful lady loved by four knights but unable to decide which knight she liked best, sent presents and messages to all. Each carried her favor and cried her name in the lists. During an Easter tournament, three of the knights were slain and the fourth was severely wounded. All four of the knights were brought on their shields to the lady. Distressed, she had the three slain knights buried in an abbey and nursed the wounded knight back to health. Mourning for the three dead knights, she told the fourth knight that she was going to make a lay about their deaths and his terrible wounds and call it "The Lay of the Four Sorrows." The knight suggested that she call it "The Lay of the Dolorous Knight." His three comrades were past suffering, he declared, but he received every day only a few courteous, empty words from the lady but no love. The lady agreed that this was a good title. However, some still call it "The Lay of the Four Sorrows."

THE LAY OF ELIDUC

In Brittany, Eliduc, having lost favor with the king because of false rumors, was forced to leave the country. After he and his wife Guideluec had pledged faithfulness to each other, Eliduc took a

ship to Totonois. There he helped an aged king defeat a prince who wanted to marry his daughter. The king gave Eliduc reward and honor, and the princess gave him her love. Although Eliduc reminded himself of his wife at home, he neglected to mention his wife to the princess. His own king, needing his help against an enemy, then sent for him. At home, Eliduc's wife was delighted to see him, but Eliduc was sad. He returned to the country of Totonois and sent word to the princess to meet him. They left secretly on a ship. During a heavy storm, one of the men cried that the princess was the cause of the storm because Eliduc had deserted his own wife at home. When the man desired to throw the princess overboard, Eliduc hit him with an oar and cast him into the sea. The lady fainted when she heard that Eliduc was married, and all believed her to be dead. Going ashore, they carried the princess to a chapel, intending to give her burial rites. Eliduc left her at the altar and went home in such a downcast mood that his wife decided to learn the cause. When she found the princess, she was overcome at the sadness of her death, even though she realized that Eliduc loved the maiden. Then she saw a weasel revive its dead mate by putting a red flower in his mouth. She took the flower, revived the girl, and told her that she would release Eliduc from his marriage vows. She took the princess to her home, released Eliduc, and became an abbess. Eliduc and the princess married and lived happily, but not ever after. For they parted and took holy orders, the princess going to the abbess, who received her as a sister. Eliduc and the princess sent messages between the convent and the monastery, each encouraging the other in the holy life. Their repentance was lasting.

THE LAY OF THE NIGHTINGALE

In the town of Saint Malo, in Brittany, a bachelor knight fell in love with his friend's wife. Although they seldom met, the two at last became lovers. Because

their houses stood side by side, they were able to pass messages and gifts through the casements and gaze at each other. When the husband asked the wife why she spent her nights watching at the casement, she said that she was listening to the nightingale. He had servants trap the bird; then he wrung its neck and threw it in her lap. The wife, sad because she could not use the bird as an excuse to see her lover, embroidered the story of the nightingale's fate on white samite, wrapped the bird in the cloth, and sent it to her lover. The doleful knight had a little chest made of gold and precious stones for the body of the bird and carried it everywhere with him.

THE LAY OF SIR LAUNFAL

Because of trouble with the Picts and Scots, King Arthur was lodging at Caerleon-on-Usk in Wales. There, at Pentecost, he bestowed honors and lands on all except Sir Launfal, the son of a king in a distant country, whom he despised. Too proud to ask his lord for his due, Launfal was poor.

Riding unattended in a meadow near a stream, Launfal dismounted because his horse was trembling. He let the horse graze while he tried to sleep. Two beautiful maidens wearing purple mantles appeared and told him that their mistress had summoned him. He found the beautiful maiden lying on a richly covered bed within a silken pavilion with a golden eagle on top. She was dressed in white linen with a mantle of ermine trimmed in purple. When she offered Launfal her love, provided that he tell no one of her existence, he accepted. She gave him rich clothing and a purse that was never empty. Now wealthy, Launfal redeemed the captive, clothed the minstrel, comforted the stranger, and was completely happy. The beautiful maiden appeared whenever he called her.

At a party in the royal orchard, Launfal ignored the queen and thirty of her most beautiful maidens because they looked like kitchen wenches to him. Call-

ing Launfal to her, the queen offered him her love. Launfal refused, saying that he would not betray his lord. Angrily the queen retorted that Launfal despised women. Launfal quickly replied that his love was richer than any there and that the meanest of her maidens excelled the queen in goodness and beauty. The queen fled weeping to her chamber.

When Arthur returned she told him that Launfal had sought her love and that she had refused him. At her refusal, she declared, Launfal had reviled her and said that his love was set on a lady whose meanest wench was fairer than the queen. Arthur swore that he would burn or hang Launfal if he could not deny his boast before his peers.

Because he had revealed her existence, Launfal lost contact with his lady. He wanted to die; instead he was compelled to appear before the court of barons. The barons said that they would look at Launfal's lady and decide if she was more beautiful than the queen. If so, there would be no trial. Because Launfal could not produce her, the barons were about to pass judgment upon him. At that moment, two beautiful maidens followed by two more beautiful maidens appeared and said that their lady was approaching. They were so beautiful that many said the queen had already lost. Soon the lady appeared, riding a white horse and wearing white with a purple mantle. Every man marveled at her beauty and cared no more for mortal women. She said that Launfal never craved the love of the queen but that he spoke hastily. The barons were overcome by her beauty and Arthur suggested that she stay a while at court. She declined and rode with Launfal away forever, perhaps to Avalon.

THE LAY OF THE TWO LOVERS

A king in Normandy had a fair daughter whom he did not wish to give in marriage, and he proclaimed that no one could wed her except that man who carried her to the pinnacle of a great and

perilous mountain. Many tried and failed. The girl fell in love with a slender young man and obtained from her aunt a magic potion that would enable him to reach the mountaintop. Armed with this herbal, the youth asked and received the king's permission to carry the girl to the pinnacle. To lighten the load, the maiden fasted for several days and wore only her smock. The youth set out bravely but refused the potion in the presence of the watchers. As he went higher, the maiden urged him to take the potion; but he refused and finally fell dead of exhaustion. Flinging away the flask of potion, the girl died of grief holding her lover in her arms. A search party led by the king found them dead. The king was distraught. They buried the lovers in a marble coffin on the mountain where they died. Wherever the magic potion touched the barren ground, saving herbs sprang up.

THE LAY OF THE WERE-WOLF

At the insistence of his wife, who demanded an explanation of his absence from home three nights a week, Bisclaveret, a baron in Brittany, revealed that he was a were-wolf. He told her that he hid his clothing in a hollow stone near a chapel and that if he were to lose his clothing he could not return to man's shape. The wife, afraid of her husband, sent for a knight who had long loved her unrewarded. She told him that her husband was a were-wolf and asked him to steal her husband's clothing from his hiding place. He did so and married the wife. Bisclaveret seemed lost forever from the world of men.

More than a year later, the king, hunting in the woods, was surprised by a wolf that fawned upon him, and he took the animal home as a pet. Bisclaveret made an admirable pet until his wife's second husband came to court. Bisclaveret sprang for his rival's throat, but the king called him off. When Bisclaveret's wife came to court, he bit off her nose. Al-

though men beat the wolf, they did not kill him, for a wise counselor pointed out that the wolf's malice was directed at only the woman and her husband. Questioned by the king, the woman revealed the truth. He made her return her first husband's clothing, but Bisclaveret ignored the garments. The counselor then suggested putting the wolf and the clothing alone in a room. Bisclaveret returned to his human form. The king, delighted, restored his fief. The wife and her second husband left the country.

THE LAY OF THE ASH TREE

When the wife of a knight in Brittany bore twin sons, the wife of another knight spread the story that two children had two fathers. A year later, the second wife had twin girls. Since she had spread the word about the double paternity, she was afraid to reveal that she had given birth to twins. At first she wanted to kill one. Later a serving maid took the child, wrapped in sanguine silk and with a rich ring tied to her wrist, and left her in an ash tree near a church. She was found and reared by an abbess, who called her Frêne, meaning ash.

When the beautiful Frêne was grown, a knight, Buron, loved her and persuaded her to run away with him to his castle. There they lived happily until the knights of the realm persuaded Buron to put Frêne away and take a wife. At last he agreed to marry another beautiful girl named Coudre, meaning hazel. Although the servants were angry with Buron, Frêne accepted this development with grace and decked her lord's bed with the sanguine silk in which she was found. After the wedding, Coudre's mother brought her daughter to the bridal bed and recognized the silk as that in which she had wrapped her twin daughter when she sent her away. She questioned Frêne, who showed her the ring. The mother obtained her husband's forgiveness and the Archbishop dissolved the marriage. Frêne married her lord and Coudre soon found another husband.

THE LAY OF THE HONEYSUCKLE

King Mark banished his nephew Tristan because he was in love with the queen, Isoude. Tristan went to his native South Wales but before long he returned to Cornwall to be near Isoude. Living in the forest, he sought shelter from friendly peasants. Hearing that King Mark planned to keep high court at Tintagel, Tristan entered a wood through which he knew Isoude would pass. He cut a wand from a hazel tree, peeled it, carved his name on it, and set it in the road where Isoude found it. To her alone it gave the message that Tristan was waiting and the fact that they were like the honeysuckle and the hazel tree, inseparable. She sent her knights aside, entered the wood with her maiden, Brangwaine, found Tristan, and spent a joyful hour with him. She told him that she was trying to reconcile Mark to him. After they parted, Tristan returned to Wales, where he made a new lay, this one.

THE LAY OF EQUITAN

King Equitan, a great but not wise lover, decided to win the love of his seneschal's wife. Although she refused at first, Equitan finally won her and they exchanged rings. When Equitan's people urged him to marry, the wife heard the news and came to him in tears. Equitan assured her that he would never marry unless her husband were to die and he might marry her. This declaration brought a plan quickly to mind. The wife asked Equitan to be bled with her husband at their castle; she would prepare a bath for both and make her husband's so hot that he would die. The king agreed and rode to the chase with the seneschal, after which the surgeon bled them. Beside each bed, the wife placed a bath, her husband's boiling. When the husband delayed his appearance, the wife and Equitan looked tenderly at each other while they sat waiting on the seneschal's bed by the steaming bath. The husband returned, brushed aside the maiden

guarding the door, and found his wife and the king in each other's arms. The king, jumping up, sprang in the fatally hot bath. Enraged, the seneschal threw his wife into the same bath. So they both died. The moral of this story is that he who seeks to do evil to another often brings evil down upon his own head.

THE LAY OF MILON

Milon, a famous knight in South Wales, received word from an unknown maiden that she would give him her love. Milon accepted and she bore him a son. Fearing her father, the girl kept the birth secret, and Milon's servants carried the baby to his mother's sister, married to a lord in Northumberland. With the child went letters and his father's signet ring to be given him when he came of age. Then Milon went in search of reward in a foreign country, and the girl was given in marriage to an old lord.

Returning to South Wales, Milon was sad to learn that his love was married, but he was happy to know that they were not far apart. He sent to her a swan with a letter concealed in a feather. She was instructed to answer the letter but keep the bird unfed for three days before she wanted the letter returned. She did as he asked, although she was compelled to wait a month before she could get parchment and ink. The swan then flew home to be fed and delivered her letter. For twenty years the swan served as messenger between the lovers, who never saw each other during that time.

In Northumberland, the son, now grown, was known as the Knight Peerless. His aunt told him of his origin and gave him the signet ring. His fame spread to Brittany, where Milon heard of the unknown young knight and determined to joust with him in order to preserve his own fame. Milon crossed the sea and met the youth in tournament, where the boy unhorsed him. When Milon's helmet was knocked off, his white hair and beard were revealed. The Peerless Knight dismounted and apologized to his elder.

When Milon asked him his name, the boy told his story and showed Milon the ring. Father and son were joyfully united, and the son promised to kill his mother's husband. They set forth for Brittany, but when they landed a messenger met Milon with the happy news that his love's husband was dead. Milon and his son went to the mother, and the youth had the joy of seeing his parents wed.

THE LAY OF YONEC

In Britain, a rich old man married a young beautiful girl whom he guarded for seven years in a castle. One day, in desperation, she cried aloud that old tales telling how a young wife married to an old lord will find a lover cannot be true. In a few minutes, a falcon alighted on her window, entered the room, and turned into a handsome knight. He said that his name was Eudemarec and that he had come at her call. The two immediately became lovers. Because the wife appeared so happy, the husband became suspicious. He pretended to leave and set his older sister to watch. When she learned the secret and told her brother, the husband set sharp blades in the window to kill the hawk. When Eudemarec alighted there next, he received his death wound. He fluttered, bleeding, to his love's bed, told her that he would die, and promised that she would bear a son, Yonec, to avenge both his death and her suffering. The lady followed the hawk out the window and tracked him by the trail of blood until she found him dying in a royal bed. He gave her a ring which he said would cause her husband to leave her alone. He also gave her a sword as a gift to his son. When the proper time came, she was to go with her husband and son to an abbey where they would see a tomb. There she was to tell her son of his father and give him the sword.

These events came to be. At the tomb the wife told Yonec of his father and gave him the sword before she fell dead on Eudemarec's tomb. The son then took

the sword and cut off the old man's head.
Because Eudamerec was king of the land,

the people proclaimed Yonec their lord as
he left the church.

THE LAST OF THE WINE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Mary Renault (Mary Challans)

Time: 430-402 B.C.

Locale: Athens and the Aegean Sea

First published: 1956

Principal characters:

ALEXIAS, a young Athenian

MYRON, his father

LYSIS, the intimate friend of Alexias

XENOPHON, a schoolmate and friend of Alexias

SOKRATES, the great philosopher

PLATO, the nickname of Aristokles, a follower of Sokrates

PHAEDO, a disciple of Sokrates

KRITIAS, an orator and politician, one of the Thirty Tyrants

THRASYBULOS, an Athenian patriot

ALKIBIADES, a brilliant but crafty orator and general

The particular triumph of Mary Renault's novel lies in the quiet authority and skill with which she restores the faded colors and blurred details in her picture of Periclean Athens during the decades of the Peloponnesian War. After more than two thousand years it is impossible to know for sure whether she presents the world as Sokrates and Plato and Euripides saw it, but her portrait of a turbulent age is at all times convincing and alive. This effect is no small achievement in itself, for of all periods of the past to which the historical novelist may be drawn, the life of ancient Greece is probably the most difficult to assay and quicken into life for the modern reader.

There is a paradox here. Since almost the whole of Western culture—philosophy, science, literature, art, democracy—is the lengthened shadow of a Greek city state which reached its peak of greatness about five hundred years before Christ, we tend to see ourselves as the direct heirs of Greek life and thought. Actually, our rights are those of discovery, not of direct inheritance, and we exercise them only because Christian Europe found in the remnants of Attic civilization a permanent source of wisdom and art. As

Virginia Woolf pointed out in one of her essays, between us and the Greeks there are sharp differences of language and racial temperament as well as a wide lapse of tradition. We may study Greek but we do not know precisely how the spoken language sounded. There are no speech echoes like those which in English carry us back to Chaucer and beyond, no sense of familiarity with scene that we are able to trace through the lives of our ancestors to a time when they lived in clearings between the black forests and the misty fens. King Arthur and his knights are real to us in a way that Jason's Argonauts and the Seven against Thebes, for example, can never be. To see the Greek world in its true perspective requires a different kind of vision: a view stripped of all romantic associations and rich detail, a way of seeing grounded in that deliberate, detached sense of fact which sets Greek poetry and prose apart from English literary tradition.

Mary Renault has used history, literature, archeology, and anthropology in order to reconstruct her picture of Athenian society and culture in *The Last of the Wine*. The tense of all fiction is the past, but only the historical novelist makes a

virtue of necessity. In this novel the very pastness of the past is the primary condition of an art which aims at a re-creation of the special values of a vanished time and place. But no one can entirely repossess the past, either through scholarship or imagination. One test of the novelist's craftsmanship is the ability to travel backward into earlier periods unburdened by the intellectual baggage of prejudice and hindsight which a later century provides. Miss Renault passes this test admirably; her novel presents no tourist survey inspired by curiosity or colored by modern complacency.

Miss Renault's writing reveals a point of view circumscribed by the mind and spirit of that distant age as it is reflected in the experience of her hero-narrator. This sense of the past is subtle and expert. It does not exist chiefly for pictorial effect, like a scenic backdrop painted to match the costumes of the actors. It is the dimensional plane on which men and women have their being, a stage for the enactment of noble but somber, portentous events.

The story is told by Alexias, a young Athenian of good family. Born in the second year of the war with Sparta, while a plague was ravaging the city and the signs were unpropitious, only the chance absence of his father kept him from being exposed to die at birth. Growing up in a troubled age, he strives for excellence in the Greek sense. Xenophon is his schoolmate and friend. Lysis, who is briefly mentioned by Diogenes Laërtius and who appears also in the episode in which Sokrates questioned two schoolboys on the subject of friendship, is the male lover and comrade in arms whom Alexias accepts according to Greek custom. A pupil under Sokrates, or at least so we would call him today, he mingles with the group that surrounds the great philosopher—Plato, Phaedo, Kriton, and others who figure in the dialogues. Under that guidance he tries to master ethical and philosophical truth. As a soldier he fights in the border forays against Sparta

and takes part in the overthrow of the oligarchs of Samos. As an athlete he is a victor in the Isthmian games held at Corinth. As an Athenian citizen he survives the horrors of the Spartan siege and lives to become one of the Men of Phyle and the slayer of Kritias when the rebel army under Thrasybulos destroys at last the Tyranny of the Thirty. Through Alexias we see how the Greek ideals of harmony, proportion, and order were a part of everyday Athenian life, even in that disordered age.

Alexias and his friend Lysis stand in the foreground of this novel, but its true center is Sokrates, that human gadfly of the state who spoke out as the conscience of his city when the Athenians lost their desire for integrity and justice in their lust for wealth and power. "The cause of all these evils was the desire for power which greed and ambition inspire," wrote Thucydides. This was the lesson Sokrates tried to teach by precept and example, and it was for this reason that he was feared by the cowardly and the insolent who sought his downfall. At the end of the novel Sokrates is still alive, but his accusers are beginning to murmur against him; the cup of hemlock he will drink within the year will vindicate his own search for truth and record indelibly the guilt of the citizens who condemned him.

The Last of the Wine has neither the ethical cast of Thornton Wilder's *The Woman of Andros* nor the archaic simplicity of Robert Graves' *Homer's Daughter*. A considerably vaster work than either, it is also more varied in its effects. Some of the most significant events—the savage destruction and enslavement of the Melians, for example, the disastrous campaign against Syracuse, the annihilation of the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami, and the death of Alkibiades in Phrygia—occur off-stage and are reported by a messenger, here an appropriately effective device because it was used for the same reason by the Greek dramatists. The novel shows all that was good and noble in Athenian civilization, but the

writer treats with equal candor those elements which were weak and base. She makes no apologies, points no moral, and to do so would be to subject to special pleading her effort to present the whole spectacle of life in that great and tragically violent age. In this connection, particular mention should be made of the accepted convention of male love, a subject the writer treats with honesty and good taste, for the light it throws upon the idealized (according to the Greek idea) rather than the sentimentalized relationship between Alexias and his friend

Lysis, and also upon the Greek concept of marriage.

This book is clearly the result of sound scholarship and a disciplined imagination, qualities which make it an outstanding historical novel. With it Mary Renault took her place beside Sigrid Undset, Zoé Oldenbourg, and Marguerite Yourcenar, women who have reclaimed historical fiction from the levels of melodramatic journalism and costume romance to make it once more a significant work of art.

LAUGHTER

Type of work: Philosophical essay
Author: Henri Bergson (1859-1941)
First published: 1900

Laughter (La Rire), Henri Bergson's profound essay on the nature and source of laughter, grows out of his concern with nineteenth century mechanization of life. For Bergson life is ever in change through time and complex in spatial terms, and any divergence from these principles, any attempt to materialize life, which is, for him, instinctive and flexible, removed from the living the very origin of life. Bergson's famous principle of *élan vital*, the vital life force that underlies all living things, leads to the central motif of his theory of comedy, that "the mechanical encrusted upon the living" promotes laughter. Any time a living thing takes on attributes of death or mechanization or rigid automatism, it ceases to be wholly alive and inspires social laughter. And comedy in Bergson's view is a social gesture designed to promote organic health in the social body. Laughter, by ridiculing social outsiders, effects in the individual at whom we laugh a desire to purge himself of unsocial traits. Comedy attempts to return to life those half-alive people on society's fringes whose failure to adapt themselves impairs social well-being.

Bergson opens Chapter One, a general

discussion of comedy, with three fundamental observations on the nature of the comic spirit: "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human"; an "absence of feeling . . . usually accompanies laughter"; and laughter's "natural environment . . . is society," its function is social: it "must have social signification." We only laugh, Bergson asserts, at things which in some way man has stamped his. We do not laugh at landscapes, for instance, but at humans or animals in which we see human elements. Nor can we laugh at things without putting aside temporarily our emotions. We may laugh at one we pity, but our pity must first be silenced. Emotion stifles laughter; intellect kindles the comic. Viewing life disinterestedly, can disengage our emotions, permitting life to impress us as comic. Finally, laughter occurs in company with others; one does not often laugh in isolation.

A man who stumbles and falls as he runs along the street becomes an object of our laughter because of his "rigidity" or "momentum," his clumsiness, or as Bergson terms it, "lack of elasticity through absentmindedness and a kind of physical obstinancy." This involuntary comic

movement caused by mechanical inelasticity is a failure to adapt oneself to circumstance, an inability to be flexible and responsive to change. It may be external, as when a person fails to notice his chair being pulled away from behind, or internal, as with the absent-minded individual whose mind is so engaged that he cannot function in the present because his mind is geared to the past. In either case, the more natural the cause of inelasticity the more comic the effect will be. In the instance of Don Quixote, whose absent-mindedness is largely due to his belief in an imaginary world, we have the whimsical madman with a systematic absent-mindedness "organized around one central idea." It is therefore doubly comic when he falls into a well while gazing at a star.

Vice may so affect a comic character that the rigidity of a fixed idea of, for example, avarice or jealousy infects his personality to the extent that he becomes, as it were, avarice or jealousy. The vice exists independently of the person, who becomes an automaton, and the character is comic "in proportion to his ignorance of himself." Awareness of others' laughter corrects our manners, making us try to appear less ridiculous, but self-correction cannot occur while ignorance of one's absurdity remains.

Because laughter has a social function and results from one's inelasticity or rigidity, society imposes on its members the necessity to adapt to circumstance. Life offers two forces, tension and elasticity, which enable man to avoid mere routine or habitual adjustment to life and to encourage a constant effort toward "reciprocal adaptation." Society fears eccentricity, which presupposes a separatist tendency in the individual, and endeavors to harmonize individual wills with one another. No cut-and-dried harmony may exist, however, since society demands a continual readjustment of wills. Society therefore must restrain the slumbering individual, who respects the group but lets his adjustment drift into dead conform-

ity, as well as the eccentric, who gravitates toward non-societal values. Because laughter is the social gesture by which society imposes its lessons upon the eccentric or the conformist, laughter satisfies both aesthetic and utilitarian aims.

Having outlined this formula for the comic spirit, Bergson then proceeds to detail the sequence of comic forms, from a clown's horseplay to the most refined effects of comedy. The comic element resident in forms derives from the opposition of soul, supple and in perpetual motion, to matter, inertly resistant to movement; when matter or body succeeds, for example, in stereotyping fleeting glances of the face, it petrifies the "outward life of the soul" in some material, "mechanical operation" and achieves a comic effect.

It is this admixture of the human and the mechanical which accounts for the comic element of gesture and movement. As the "attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body" remind us of a machine they are proportionately laughable. Whenever mechanism appears in the human body, as in the gestures of a public speaker, the repetition elicits the comic response. When attention focuses on form instead of matter, on body instead of soul, comic response must occur.

In Chapter Two Bergson turns to the comic element in situations and in words. He again finds the comic residing in the dualism of the mechanical and the human: whenever acts or events give us, in a single combination, the "illusion of life and the distinct impression of a mechanical arrangement," comedy results. The ultimate formulae for the archetypes of the comic state are repetition, inversion, and reciprocal interference of series. Repetition reflects a mathematical or symmetrical ordering of life. Inversion is simply the reversal of roles, as when a prisoner lectures the judge. Reciprocal interference describes a situation, belonging simultaneously to different series of events, yet capable of two entirely different interpretations. The laughter of

words also falls under these three headings; whenever the living quality, the suppleness, of language is contrasted to the rigid mechanism of language, laughter searches out this automatism and corrects it.

Chapter Three examines the comic element of character. Bergson asserts that laughter has a real social meaning, expresses a special lack of adaptation to society, and cannot exist apart from man. A character who removes himself from society is fundamentally comic; he illustrates the very basis of comedy which begins with a "growing callousness to social life." But comedy does not necessarily direct itself at moral faults; rather it usually aims to correct social aloofness.

Bergson places comedy midway between life and art. Art expresses true reality. Society constructs its values on the superficial perceptions of ordinary men, but art deals with the deeper realities. Comedy, because it accepts a social, utilitarian goal—correction of the social outsider—lies close to life; yet because it also aims to please, comedy belongs to art.

Comedy differs from tragedy in that the latter seeks the individual, the unique, while comedy presents the general, the type. Comedy depicts general characters, universals of humanity, categorizing men by the surface distinctions man makes in his everyday life. The comic poet observes inductively, surveys man for external, general eccentricities, never endeavoring to portray causes of social alienation for fear of engaging our emotions, hence endangering the comic element. Comedy tries to isolate the ready-made facet of character, the mechanical, and creates types. Tragedy plumbs the depths of the individual, gives an impression of life, and develops out of the poet's psychological observations. The tragic poet's characters are in a sense extensions of his own personality.

Comedy therefore is not disinterested as genuine art is. Comedy accepts social life as a natural environment; it even obeys an impulse of social life. In this respect it rejects art, which is a reaction against society and a return to nature.

THE LAY OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

Type of work: Poem

Author: Unknown

Time: Late twelfth century

Locale: The steppes of Russia

First published: 1800

Principal characters:

IGOR, Prince of Novgorod-Seversk

PRINCE VSEVOLOD, his brother

PRINCE VLADIMIR, his son

PRINCE SVATOSLAV, his nephew

THE GREAT PRINCE of Kiev

The Lay of Igor's Campaign, a heroic romance written about 1187, is the earliest great work of Russian literature. Moreover, it is the only surviving heroic poem of the Russian Middle Ages and it is the only piece of artistically great literature known to have appeared in Russia before the nineteenth century. The poem, of which the author is unknown, is

admired by most educated Russians both for its place in the Russian tradition and its literary excellence. Although it is relatively unknown outside of Russia, it has been widely translated.

The subject matter of *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* is typically medieval: the expedition, defeat, capture, and escape of a knightly warrior—Prince Igor

of Novgorod-Seversk (not to be confused with Novgorod the great, a much more famous and important city of old Kievan Russia). Igor's antagonists were the Kumans, a race of pagan nomads who inhabited the southern steppes around the Don River. Three other princes and their troops accompanied Igor's contingent: Igor's brother, Prince Vsevolod; Igor's son, Prince Vladimir; and Igor's nephew, Prince Svatoslav. However, while it is an early work, and while it did not appear in a culture notable for its literary and artistic achievements, and while it is ostensibly a heroic tale of warriors and battle, the poem is far from being a primitive and unsophisticated work. Like the other medieval national epics to which it is sometimes compared, such as *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of My Cid*, the poem is the product of a very skillful artist whose insight and poetic skill is of the highest order. In fact, the art of this Russian poem strikes one as being in some respects more subtle than that of either the French or the Spanish poem; it has been said with some justice that the sophisticated, symbolic technique of the lay has a striking kinship with contemporary poetic techniques.

The history of the poem is somewhat obscure. While it was probably written about 1187, memory of it was soon lost and it remained unknown until 1795 when Count Alexei Wanovich Musin-Pushkin, a distinguished literary amateur, discovered a manuscript copy of the poem. He purchased what was probably a sixteenth century codex from an ex-official of a recently dissolved monastery. The codex had been in the monastery library. *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* was one of several manuscript items included in it. The text was published in 1800, but little was known at that time about interpreting and editing early Russian texts and the edition was marred by errors and misinterpretations. Moreover, the sixteenth century scribe who had copied the text into the codex was himself unfamiliar with the twelfth century Rus-

sian language, and thus the manuscript itself was far from accurate. Before a second edition of the poem could be prepared for the printer, the manuscript was burned when Napoleon burned Moscow in 1812. Modern scholars have succeeded in repairing much of the damage of time, but nevertheless certain brief passages in the poem remain obscure. It should be noted also that it was for a time assumed by some that the story of the discovery of the poem in 1795 was a hoax and that the poem was a modern forgery. However, a portion of the poem has been found quoted verbatim in a manuscript made in 1307, and thus we know that the poem is genuine.

The unknown author of the lay composed his masterpiece late in the twelfth century, about one or two years after the events of which he speaks had actually occurred. This date can be determined by certain matters that are mentioned in the text. It is known that the characters and the events of the narrative are historical, for the story can be checked in certain surviving medieval chronicles. So far as we can determine from the poem, the author was a layman, very likely a soldier, who was the companion of some prince of Kievan Russia, perhaps of Igor himself. The poet was a city dweller but was familiar with the life of the steppes. He was also familiar with the literature and oral traditions, such as they were, of his times. We can tell from references in the text that there was a tradition of heroic oral poetry in the generations before the author of *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* wrote. The author refers to and quotes one of those older poets, one "Bayan the Bard."

However, the poem was not written by a professional singer to be sung, as was, for example, the French *Song of Roland*. That is, although the author did not hesitate to use the techniques of oral poetry to achieve many of his poetic effects, the lay is a purely literary work written to be read. The spirit of the poem, it should be noted is secular, heroic, and, crucially,

patriotic; Russia as much as Igor is the hero of the piece. While the poem is nominally a Christian work, Christianity is only an incidental element in it. The older pagan nature worship of pre-Christian Russia has a much more integral place in the imagery and the tone of the poem.

Thus far we have called this a heroic poem, but in fact it is not a heroic tale *per se*. It is really quite difficult to classify. For while a heroic narrative is the foundation of the piece, much of it is a lyric lament for the feudal discord that characterized the poet's age; moreover, much of the time the object of the author seems to be to write a vigorous admonition to the princes responsible for the feuds and troubles of Kievan Russia, and to that extent the lay is an inspired piece of political oratory. At last we must conclude that the work is a blend of the narrative, the lyric, and the hortatory. Further, it is not a poem in the strict sense, but a prose poem in a uniquely Russian sense. The rhythm of the language is not the rhythm of verse, and the work is not composed in lines, but in the rhythmical prose typical of the old Russian liturgy; which, while it was sung, as *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* was not composed in verse. Nevertheless, it is emphatically poetic in its complex and vivid use of imagery, metaphor, and simile; and the total effect of the work can only be described as powerfully poetic.

Structurally, the poem falls into eight sections: (1) the poet's prologue in which the author comments on the literary usage of the past and the departures he will make to achieve his own literary ends; (2) the determination of Igor and his brother to make their expedition; (3) the advance across the steppes and Igor's initial success; (4) the defeat and capture of the Russian forces. At this point the scope of the poem expands dramatically. The poet begins to dramatize the meaning of Igor's defeat to the Russian people as (5) he begins a lyrical-oratori-

cal digression first in his own voice and then in the voice of the Great Prince of Kiev. The prince, not yet aware of the disaster of Igor, has had a prophetic and symbolic dream of ill omen. Next (6), the poet apostrophizes nine other princes, asking them to end their quarrels and to join together to save Igor and Russia. This section is followed by (7) a lyric lament by Igor's wife on the walls of her city. The poem ends with (8) a brief account of Igor's escape from the Kumans and a closing apostrophe by the poet.

This architectonic structure is supported and interpenetrated by an equally important poetic structure of symbol and imagery based primarily on nature: the sun, light and darkness, the land, the rivers, plants, winds, and the ancient nature gods. The men of the poem, their actions, their emotions, and the political, military, and social forces in the world of the poem, are all perceived and expressed in terms of this nature imagery and symbolism. In the end, the picture that *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* presents is one of a totally integrated world in which there is no distinct line of separation between the world of men and the world of dynamic nature. For example, the expedition begins amidst ominous eclipses of the sun—the light-darkness idea is complicated throughout the narrative until at the end Igor escapes his captors under cover of darkness. Also, at the sight of Igor's defeat, the trees bow down in grief. Throughout the poem the foreboding and anxious voices of nature can be heard moving in the wind and the rivers; and as Igor escapes he holds a thankful dialogue with the pro-Russian river Donets while he sneeringly mocks the anti-Russian river Stugna. This interpenetrating structure of image, symbol, and action is too complex to more than hint at here. Nevertheless, for all its complexity of parts, when the lay is seen as a whole, it has, as do all great works of art, an overall simplicity and power that no serious reader can miss.

THE LEOPARD

Type of work: Novel

Author: Giuseppe di Lampedusa (1896-1957)

Time: 1860-1910

Locale: Sicily

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

DON FABRIZIO CORBERA, Prince of Salina

TANCREDI FALCONERI, his nephew and ward, an opportunist

PRINCESS MARIA STELLA, Don Fabrizio's wife

PAOLO,

FRANCESCO PAOLO,

CAROLINA,

CONCETTA, and

CATERINA, five of their seven children

DON CALOGERO SEDÀRA, a provincial mayor

ANGELICA, his daughter, wooed by Tancredi

COUNT CARLO CAVRIAGHI, Concetta's suitor

FATHER PIRRONE, chaplain in the Salina household

THE CAVALIERE AIMONE CHEVALLEY DI MONTERZUOLO, a Piedmontese politician

Giuseppe Tomasi, Duke of Palma, Prince of Lampedusa, was a Sicilian aristocrat born in 1896. He traveled widely but spent most of his days in his slightly dilapidated palace in Palermo, Sicily. He was a man of great culture and fine manners who had never published anything, but who had for many years thought of writing a book that would combine his own experiences with the biographies of his father and grandfather and with the historical events that had affected his family. At the age of sixty he began *The Leopard* and was able to complete it a year before his death in 1957. The manuscript was read by Giorgio Bassani, an editor for the firm of Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, and he was so impressed by it that he could not believe it the work of an unknown writer. The novel was published in Milan in 1958. In English translation it is somewhat mistitled, for a *gattopardo*, as the book was titled in Italian, is not a leopard but a serval, a species of tawny, black-spotted wildcat.

The Leopard became an overnight popular success, but its critical reception was not, in Italy at least, an unqualified triumph. When it was nominated for the Strega Award, the most important Italian

literary prize, Alberto Moravia is supposed to have declared that a vote for *Il Gattopardo* was a vote against the modern Italian novel. It is not difficult to understand his attitude. Turning its back on the thematic and stylistic concerns to which most Italian writers have devoted their efforts since the end of World War II, *The Leopard* is a serenely solid, richly detailed, and strangely old-fashioned work bringing together various strands in the great European tradition of the novel: Stendhal, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Proust. Surprisingly, the work found a champion in Ignazio Silone and went on to win the award amid popular acclaim. In France and Germany it was hailed as a masterpiece and a literary miracle.

The novel opens in the year 1860, when the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies is being invaded by Garibaldi's red-shirted volunteers. In Sicily, a land reduced to political apathy by centuries of conquest and foreign rule, Don Fabrizio, Prince of the ancient feudal House of Salina, waits to see whether Garibaldi is only another upstart adventurer or a patriot dedicated to the unification of Italy under *il galantuomo*, Victor Emmanuel, the Piedmontese king. A tawny-haired man of passive

disposition, great physical energy in the hunting field, strong sensual appetites, and some reputation as an amateur astronomer, the prince dominates the novel in the same way he rules his family and with unconscious arrogance lords it over the peasants on his estates. Although his allegiance is to King Francis II, his common sense tells him that the Bourbon regime in Naples is tottering and soon to fall. At the same time he is too shrewd and worldly-wise to expect that the Risorgimento will greatly transform a way of life that had been molded by Byzantine tax collectors, Berber emirs, Spanish viceroys, the Church, and the Bourbons. Faced with the necessity of choosing a side, he hesitates and in the end does nothing. For him, while all Italy is being shaken, life goes on very much as before. He ignores his pious wife, dislikes his heir, keeps a mistress close at hand for his body's needs and a browbeaten chaplain for his soul's salvation, and watches the stars.

The only person for whom he has any real affection is his penniless, scapegrace nephew Tancredi, Prince of Falconeri, in whom he finds a reflection of his own restless youth. Ironically, his fondness for the boy turns out to be his salvation. When Tancredi goes off to join Garibaldi in the hills, Don Fabrizio gives him a roll of gold pieces. This act, a gesture of love and family feeling, has political consequences. When the Garibaldists triumph, Don Fabrizio finds himself regarded as a supporter of the cause.

As for Tancredi, he bobs like a cork on the wave of the future. His philosophy, as he explains it to his uncle, is simple. He says that if they were not with the cause, the rebels would form a republic, and if they did not want change, then the rebels would make changes. He fights with Garibaldi in the hills, takes a commission in the Piedmontese army before Garibaldi and his ragged followers are defeated by *il galantuomo's* troops at Aspromonti, and to recoup his family fortunes courts and marries the beautiful

daughter of a rich, vulgar provincial upstart.

Don Fabrizio also meets the future. The first time is in the person of Don Calogero Sedàra, the mayor of Donnafugata, who in the time of the Risorgimento bought, traded, and sold so shrewdly that before long his revenues almost match those of the Salina estates. The second occasion is the time of the plebiscite for unification. Don Fabrizio, knowing that there can be no return to the old ways, advises those who ask his opinion to vote Yes. Secretly, he knows that a number have voted against unification, but when the votes are counted in Donnafugata the return stands: Voters, 515; Voted, 512; Yes, 512; No, none. The wily mayor has stuffed the ballot box. The third time is in the person of Don Calogero once more when Don Fabrizio must eat his pride—the Italian phrase is “swallowing a toad”—as he goes to the town hall to ask the mayor formally for the hand of his daughter Angelica in the name of his nephew, Tancredi Falconeri. The scene is filled with wry comedy. In earlier times the Salinas had exercised a *droit de seigneur* over handsome girls like Angelica; in the new Italy spendthrift young noblemen would marry them. He is made no happier by the knowledge that his daughter Concetta also loves Tancredi and has now lost him to the daughter of a grasping, ambitious peasant father and a mother who had once tended pigs.

When the Cavaliere Aimone Chevalley di Monterzuolo asks Don Fabrizio to accept a post as senator in the new kingdom, the prince, being what he is, feels this to be no particular honor and pretends not to understand what being a senator means: Is it a title of honor? A decoration? Chevalley is sincerely disturbed, and so the prince undertakes to explain his attitude, the one occasion in the book when Don Fabrizio speaks openly and bitterly about the history of Sicily and the character of Sicilians, who never want to improve because they

think themselves already perfect, whose vanity is greater than their misery. He explains that he is caught between the old world and the new and feels ill at ease in both. Further, he is without illusions and lacks the talent for self-deception, a necessary quality for guiding others. He is unable to blend personal interest with vague public aims and ideals. This speech, nearly nine pages long, is the only impassioned speech in the book and a clear statement of the prince's position. Don Fabrizio ends this remarkable discourse on time, mutability, and knowledge of tragic destiny enclosed in the ambiguities of the past by suggesting that Don Calogero Sedàra, a man for the future, be named to the new Senate.

The Leopard is less a historical novel than a story of time's ravages and erosions in a period of historical change, its feeling all the more compassionate and revealing because Lampedusa was writing about his own family. Like Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* or Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, the book becomes a haunting study in social decay. Two afterpieces round out the picture. In the first, dated 1888, Don Fabrizio dies, the survivor of a way of life that was feudal, despotic, but in many ways fruitful and good; he has lived to see the new class of money and bourgeois power exercising its authority with brutal realism. The other is dated 1910. Tancredi is dead and Angelica is now a dashing widow. Don Fabrizio's spinster daughters, Caroline, Concetta, and Caterina, live in pious seclusion amid religious relics and souvenirs of the past. Concetta realizes too late how she had lost Tancredi to Angelica because of her own pride and folly, how futile was the love which had caused her

to reject Tancredi's friend, Count Carlo Cavriaghi, when he came wooing. Her final gesture is to throw out on a rubbish heap the moth-eaten pelt of Bendicò, her father's favorite dog. As it falls from the open window into the courtyard it assumes in the air for a moment the appearance of a dancing quadruped with long whiskers and one foreleg seemingly raised in imprecation—a ghastly travesty on the crest of the Salinas.

So traditional is the structure of this massive and evocative novel that only in retrospect does the reader see how deftly Lampedusa has employed symbols to convey his subtle meanings. None stands out more vividly than the partly dilapidated palace of the Salinas at Donnafugata, where in a season of sultry heat Tancredi and Angelica carry on their courtship during tours through empty rooms and deserted corridors musty with the smell of decay. Their rambles are more than a search for the strange and unknown by two young people in love; they are pursuing illusions. Time makes them tenants of an empty house, a symbolic mansion as doomed as any in William Faulkner's legend of the South.

If *The Leopard*, a moving and deeply resonant novel in effect, presents a moral, it is this: the true vanity of human wishes is man's attempt to direct the course of history or to shape his own destiny. Convincing in its characters, absorbing in its story, *The Leopard* is a book of deep insights and philosophical implications. As a recapture of things past, it goes beyond the dimensions of historical fiction to comment memorably on much that is universal and unchanging in the condition of mankind.

LEOPARDS AND LILIES

Type of work: Novel

Author: Alfred Duggan (1903-)

Time: The first half of the thirteenth century

Locale: England

First published: 1954

Principal characters:

MARGARET FITZGEROLD

WARIN FITZGEROLD, her father, chamberlain to King John

BALDWIN DE REDVERS, her first husband

COUNT WILLIAM DE REDVERS, his father

YOUNG BALDWIN, Margaret's son by her first marriage

FALKES DE BREALTE, her second husband, captain of King John's crossbows

HUBERT DE BURGH, one of King John's counsellors, later Falkes' enemy

JOHN, King of England

HENRY III, King of England

The title, *Leopards and Lilies*, somewhat enigmatic as it is, offers a challenge to the reader. Actually, there is nothing mysterious about the title. One who remembers some of the lesser details of the history of the Middle Ages may recall the fact that in the period during which rebel barons forced King John of England to grant them the Magna Carta the leopard was the symbol of the House of Anjou, the side of John and his loyal supporters, while the lilies were the symbol of the rebels who received aid from the Dauphin of France. It is against the background of that confused struggle between rebels and loyalists in the years following the granting of the Great Charter in 1215 that this novel is laid.

The story, always absorbing, depicts the life of a young woman whose adventures begin when her father, a nobleman, marries her out of hand to the scion of the Count of Devon, to give some measure of safety to the girl in the troublous times of civil war. The girl, Margaret fitz-Gerold, is the daughter of Warin fitz-Gerold, chamberlain to the king. Lord Warin cannot take the girl to the court with him, for fear her chastity may be molested by the courtiers or by the king himself. Margaret, although less than fourteen years old, is calm and serene about marriage, being a child of her times; the thought of marriage means to her castles, servants, and overlordship, rather than the young lad, barely her senior, to whom she will be wed.

Margaret's career is a strange one, bound to the events of her age and inextricably tangled with the affairs of the

nobility in a period when England was frequently a patchwork hastily thrown together politically as the fortunes of the rebel barons and their loyalist opponents ebbed and flowed across the island. Her first marriage to Baldwin de Redvers is somewhat less than satisfactory to Margaret, inasmuch as her husband is a mere child and Count William, her widowed father-in-law, hoping in that way to keep his fiefs and treasures intact and his position secure, tries only to be self-effacing in the struggle between the king and the rebels.

Although the ruler of a large medieval household for Count William, Margaret soon becomes bored with the isolated life at Plympton Castle. Her only real satisfaction is a pregnancy that results in the birth of a male heir to carry on the Redvers line for Count William. By presenting her husband and his father with a male heir, Margaret has, by the standards of her class and times, made herself a place in the world. Even so, young Margaret, ambitious and restless, felt boredom, knowing that other ladies of her station were busy defending castles, ransoming captive husbands, and riding with the armies, while she remained burdened with her pregnancy and then her child.

The calculating quality in Margaret is swiftly brought to light at the death of her husband barely a year following her marriage. The shrewd fourteen-year-old matron, anxious to preserve her place in the world as the mistress of vast fiefs, persuades her father-in-law to let her and the child seek refuge with the rebel barons in London, while Count William re-

mains at Plympton to hold the castle for the king. Thus, no matter who wins the struggle, loyalists or rebels, the Redvers have a foot in the winning camp. Margaret hopes that she will have a chance to experience the glitter and gaiety of the court in London, where the Dauphin of France is supporting the rebels.

By the fortunes of war Margaret soon finds herself a prisoner of King John, who, as suzerain of her lands, has the disposal of her hand in marriage. As calmly as before, Margaret accepts a husband, a Norman knight named Falkes de Brealte, raised out of obscurity by the king. Disdaining her second husband's ancestry, disliking him, Margaret still does as she is bid. With the shrewdness of a child and a woman, she plans to have her marriage annulled if the rebels win. The king's victory leaves her married to an influential baron.

After eight years Margaret's second husband falls into disfavor and himself rebels against the boy king who is John's successor. When Bedford castle's defense is overthrown and her husband is deprived of his holdings and sentenced to banishment, Margaret, still scheming, shows her disloyalty by pleading that her marriage to Falkes was made under duress. But Margaret overreaches herself. Her disloyalty to a husband, even to one beneath her station, causes her to become a social outcast in medieval society. Her husband, to her dismay, appeals to the Pope for redress, and receives it.

Many aspects of thirteenth century life in England are presented in the novel: political, military, religious, and cultural. Their appearance does not mean, however, that the reader should look for a definitive account of these aspects of medieval life. The background is always present, playing its part in the action, but the realistic detail is given only insofar as it contributes to the story, for Duggan, in the tradition of the historical romance, is first and foremost a storyteller, the twentieth-century parallel of the *trouvères* who entertain the gentlefolk in the novel.

At first the political background to the story may seem to lack clarity. Three reasons may be offered in explanation. In the first place, the author took it for granted that the reader has some notion of the events surrounding the history of the Magna Carta, either from schooldays or, perhaps, familiarity with Shakespeare's *King John*. In the second place, the fluid political situation, in which medieval barons frequently changed sides, cannot easily be described. Lastly, the political situation is not the center of interest in the novel; it is simply a backdrop and partial motivation for the characters. Duggan used the medieval struggles much as Cooper used the Anglo-French conflicts in America during the eighteenth century in *The Deerslayer* and *The Pathfinder*.

As far as the military aspects of medieval life are concerned, there is a great amount of detail. The code of chivalry peculiar to the age and time, the place of knight and mercenary, and the anomalous position of the knight raised from the ranks are all made clear through the participation in the action by representatives of each group. Details of a siege are presented from the viewpoint of the besieged. Of especial interest is the surprise of the defenders when confronted with the results of a trebuchet used to batter down their defenses. Their surprise is comparable to the advent of new weapons and the effect on twentieth century people of atomic warfare.

Through every aspect of thirteenth century life the influence of the Church is made manifest in *Leopards and Lilies*. Agents of the Church are prominent; lesser figures, such as bishops, monks, and chaplains, are constantly in view, as they were in the medieval world. The Church's influence is felt by the characters, even to the king's granting time for absolution to condemned mercenaries lest their souls be lost, even though their lives were forfeit.

More difficult to assess than the political, military, and religious aspects of me-

dieval life is the attention given by the author to cultural matters. Again the reader must be aware that details are not given for their own sake. They are written into the novel when they help explain action, characterization, and background. Yet many items about the routine of women, sources of water and food, table manners, dress, sleeping quarters, falconry, and hunting, are presented.

But it was in his characterizations that Alfred Duggan succeeded most admirably. His people are not twentieth century characters masquerading in the costumes

of the thirteenth century against a background of museum bric-a-brac. The characters are all believable medieval folk. The bishops, the knights, the soldiers, the servants, and the rest, including the heroine Margaret, carry an air of authenticity. One can believe that they are thinking, speaking, and acting as people really did. In short, Alfred Duggan wrote a historical romance in the best tradition, and he re-created an entertaining, vivid part of the past in a manner both believable and intelligible to the modern reader.

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN

Type of work: A written and photographic documentary on the Southern cotton tenant farmers

Author: James Agee (1909-1955); Walker Evans (1903-), photographer

First published: 1941

In 1936 James Agee, a writer, and Walker Evans, a photographer on leave from the Farm Security Administration, were commissioned by the staff of a magazine to do an article on cotton tenantry that would be a photographic and verbal record of the daily lives of the average white sharecropper. As the two men carried out their assignment, they found it developing into a much larger project than that originally conceived. Ultimately, they were forced to return to their jobs much sooner than they wished and the work that they had done and assembled was refused publication by those who had commissioned it. Eventually it found publication on condition that certain words be deleted that were illegal in Massachusetts. By that time, 1941, Agee and Walker envisioned *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, complete in itself, as part of a larger whole to be called *Three Tenant Families*. The other part was never done. In its present form the book consists of sixty-two photographs followed by a lengthy text partly factual, partly imaginative, all extremely detailed. A narrative of fact, a regional study, a moving moral document, a lyric medita-

tion on life and art, an exercise in style, it is one of the most remarkable books of the century.

First, as in a playscript, the members of the three families are listed, their ages, relationships, and their farms. In this list Agee casts himself as a spy, traveling as a journalist, and Evans as a counterspy, traveling as a photographer. Listed also are William Blake, Celine, Ring Lardner, Jesus Christ, and Sigmund Freud, as unpaid agitators.

Many critics considered the book a structural failure. It has no apparent pattern of development. Agee begins by explaining that the project was corrupt, obscene, terrifying, and mysterious. He realized painfully that he was spying into the private misery of these people, that their lives would thus be exposed as passing entertainment to the curious and casual reader, and that he was being paid for doing this. Thus, determined to show the sacredness and dignity of each life down to the smallest detail, he approached his subjects with boundless love and humility.

He records three incidents, called "Late Sunday Morning," "At the Forks,"

and "Near a Church," so moving to him as to render him almost inarticulate at the time of the event, but about which he writes simply and vividly. In the first, a white foreman intrudes into the Negro community and forces three Negroes to sing for Agee and Evans. At the forks, Agee asks directions of a sick young man, his worn wife, and a mentally retarded older man. Near a church which Evans wished to enter in order to take photographs, Agee frightened a young Negro couple by running up behind them. In each case he empathized so strongly with each individual that he felt sympathy and understanding for the foreman even though he humiliated the Negro singers; he felt sick with joy and gratitude when the wife at the forks showed sufficient confidence in him to smile slightly; he felt the fear of the young couple and the utter impossibility of ever communicating clearly to them his intentions.

A Country Letter, which begins Part I, and which Agee wrote while sitting up late at night, contains some of the most beautiful lyric prose of the entire book. It is unified, developed, and complete in itself. Agee speaks of his tenants specifically, but he places them and their flimsy homes against a backdrop of the earth and the universe so that they and their problems, their joys and sorrows, become representative of all men; and the theme running through the entire piece is of aspirations and ideals dulled and lost, worn down by the hard necessities of living, of the flame of life that sinks down almost to an ember as they ask themselves how they were thus caught.

Parts I and II are primarily factual. The people themselves are introduced and their complex family relationships are clarified. The order of their rising and the getting breakfast are described in detail. Agee explains simply the attempts of the men to find other work during slack times on the farm and the kinds of jobs available to them. The chapter on money is an objective and devastating account of the tenant farmers' financial situation.

The section on shelter is almost a hundred pages long. He details the setting of one tenant home, the surrounding fields, the spring, the garden, and the outbuildings, including the contour and quality of the soil, the angle of the path, the flavor of the water, the shape and size of the building, the boards and nails holding them together, and the odds and ends found inside them. Systematically he examines, as with a microscope, the house itself, its outside structure and materials, the space underneath the house including the dampness, insects living there, the odors; then, inside, the front bedroom, where he himself slept, the rear bedroom, where the family slept, the kitchen and storeroom, and the space beneath the roof. For each room he describes the walls, floor, placement of furniture, the furniture itself and the contents of each drawer down to bits of dust, the items on the furniture and pinned to the walls, the insects inhabiting the bed, the wasps in the beams of the roof, the textures and odors, and the imagined hopes and feelings of the people whose home it is. His description of the house is of a living thing, flimsy and inadequate, but alive and placed, like the people, against the curve of the earth and sky. He describes the homes of the other two families also, but chiefly to point out their differences from the first. The final part of this section is devoted to the life present other than human: the dogs, cats, cows, mules, pigs, snakes, insects, birds, and trees. These lives too are described with respect and consideration, with humor, and with an appreciation of the beauty to be found in them.

Part II is devoted to sections on clothing, education, and work. Agee lists the items of clothing worn by the men and women on Sundays, Saturdays, and workdays. He describes in particular detail a suit of overalls and the shirt worn with them, their cut, pockets, stitching, straps, color, and texture when new, when partly worn out, and when completely worn out, differentiating carefully between the

three stages; and again he makes the clothes almost alive, an outer skin, part of the man who wears them.

The section on education, termed brilliant by some critics, is an angry analysis of the failure of schools and teachers not only in the South but everywhere properly to educate the young, of society's forcing on them work which has no bearing on their lives and values which are meaningless and harmful.

In "Work" Agee gives a step by step description of the raising of cotton, from the preparation of the soil through the sowing, cultivating, and harvesting of the crop. This work is extremely laborious and is done with primitive, inadequate tools. The entire family participates in the labor and in the anxious waiting for harvest, which will determine the meager incomes of the sharecroppers.

The next part of the book, called "Intermission," is illustrative of the confused structure of the book. It deals with a questionnaire sent to writers by *The Partisan Review* and Agee's answer to it.

Part III, "Inductions," goes back in point of time to the first meetings between Agee and Evans and the three families involved in their work. In particular, the section describes Agee's first night in the Gudgers' home, how he came to be there, what they said and ate, and how they all reacted to the situation.

From that point on the book consists of short pieces: descriptions of a graveyard, of Squinch Gudger and his mother, of Ellen Woods; a poem, the first line of which gives the book its title; and a sec-

tion entitled "Notes and Appendices" containing various notes, chiefly on Margaret Bourke-White, and a listing of Anglo-Saxon monosyllables.

The concluding piece describes a call, possibly of a small furbearing animal, probably a fox, heard one night from the Gudgers' front porch. The call was answered by another animal, and as the two continued to call back and forth Agee and his friend speculated on the animals and their locations. Finally, within himself, Agee experienced the joy of hearing the world talk, of nature talking, as well as the grief that comes from inability to communicate.

The faults of the book arise from its very virtues: Agee's love and compassion for people result not only in vivid, lyric prose but also in verbosity and repetition. When it first appeared, some critics thought Agee's prose arrogant, mannered, precious, nonsensical; others found it confused and adolescent. Obsessed though the author was with his own complex reactions to his subjects and the rest of the world, and his failure to convey all that he felt, he nevertheless gave a picture of himself and of the tenants and their lives in a way that is vivid and overwhelming. At times the writer's sensibility would be almost unbearable if it were not of a high moral order. Like Melville's *Moby Dick* and Thoreau's *Walden*, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* breaks through the limits of reality to convey meanings and insights that are rich and strange in its presentation of personal revelation and moral significance.

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

Author: Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

First published: *Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of His Life*, 1837; *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas, 3 vols., 1935

Charles Lamb is one of the most pleasant and most companionable figures in English letters. He was the author of several works of relative unimportance, such as his best-known poem "Old Familiar

Faces" (published in a volume called simply *Blank Verse*, 1798), *A Tale of Rosamund Gray* (1798), the generally ineffective drama *John Woodvil* (1802), and the farce *Mr. H.* (1806), *The Ad-*

ventures of *Ulysses* (1808), *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808), and others. But he is deservedly best remembered for his *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) and the *Essays of Elia*.

The *Tales from Shakespeare* consists of Shakespeare's plays rewritten, supposedly for children but actually of such high quality that they have been immensely popular with adults also. For the volume Lamb rewrote six tragedies and his sister Mary rewrote fourteen comedies. They did not include the histories, the Roman plays, and two other comedies. The beauty and art with which these stories recapture the essence and style of Shakespeare's language is remarkable, almost as though the later versions were prose renditions of the plays written by Shakespeare himself. The transition between Shakespeare's language and that of the Lambs is scarcely visible or of varying quality.

The *Essays of Elia* were first contributed to *The London Magazine* during the years between 1820 and 1825. Signed "Elia," they were first published as a book in 1823. A second volume, *Last Essays of Elia*, appeared in 1833. The most famous of these essays are undoubtedly "Dream Children: A Reverie," a magical recreation of youth, and "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," a whimsical fantasy about the Chinese custom of burning down houses to cook their pork. In these essays Lamb is very consciously a stylist re-creating and revitalizing the language of older English writers, especially Robert Burton, the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621, and Sir Thomas Browne in his *Vulgar Errors*, published in 1646. In these works Lamb is relaxed, quaint, archaic, and whimsical. From these essays in particular has come the notion, held in the writer's day as well as since, that Lamb was above all things "gentle," a term he came to detest and to protest against.

Although Lamb was "gentle" in these essays, he was in life quite the opposite.

He was at times somewhat eccentric and given to being different from other people because of a proclivity for the quaint. But he was never a recluse. Instead, he was very much a part of life, which he loved and enjoyed despite the terrible tragedies of his life—the murder of their mother by his sister Mary and the care he gave her during her recurrent fits of insanity.

But Lamb's letters, surely not among the greatest letters of literary figures, reveal a tough little man who affirmed life in the face of many frustrations and misfortunes. He did not whine over his role in life and generally he was willing to accept it on its own terms rather than try to make it over into a more desirable image.

Stylistically the letters are worlds apart from the language of the essays. In his daily—or rather, nightly—writing he reacts to life in language that is simple, direct, idiomatic, at times racy, snappish, and very ungentle.

Lamb was gregarious and congenial with his friends despite the fact that he stammered—an affliction which added charm to his personality—but reticent among persons he did not know well. When relaxed he was outgoing, boisterous, playful, and a grim punster who often did not know when to drop an overworked pun. Though he was not liked by all persons who knew him, his range of acquaintanceship was wide, including some of the leading authors of the day, especially Coleridge and Wordsworth.

Lamb, contrary to the main Romantic impulse of the day, was a city man by birth and taste. Nature to him, as he told Wordsworth, was dead. But London life was his exhilaration. He loved the rattle, the noise, the masquerade, the pantomime. It fed him without ever filling him. He reacted so strongly to the movement that it sometimes filled him with tears merely to know the joy of it. For this reason he was remarkably indifferent to the world outside London. He did not care for the mountains. He cared next to

nothing for the momentous events of the Continent during the years of revolution and the Napoleonic wars, nor apparently for the strife raised in England by these catastrophes. Though liberal in his political leanings, he maintained throughout life a marvelous indifference to political events at home or abroad.

Yet his letters sparkle with the matters that concerned him. He was keenly interested in the writers of his day as well as those of earlier times, their ideas and philosophies, their everyday affairs. He was especially interested in the theater, although his own attempts to write for that medium were disastrously unsuccessful, and his criticism, though not of the first magnitude, was filled with insight and incisiveness. The letters reveal also that Lamb was an enthusiastic devotee of "Lords Food and Drink."

Lamb was intimate with Coleridge, whom he had met while both were students at Christ's Hospital. Many of his best letters were written to this life-long friend. Through Coleridge, Lamb met Wordsworth. He also knew William Hazlitt, Robert Southey, Leigh Hunt, and William Godwin, as well as the actress Fanny Kelly, to whom he proposed marriage.

His letters abound with chitchat, the trivial, as well as with serious subjects of much interest to him. He liked Burns, Rousseau's *Confessions*, the philosopher George Berkeley, (he wanted at one time to become a Berkeleyan), the Quakers William Penn and John Woolman.

He was uninhibited in giving advice. He urged Coleridge to be simple in his writing and avoid elaborateness because simplicity is the very essence of expression. He also urged Coleridge to write an epic because it was the only kind of poem that could accommodate the full genius of a poet.

He did not hesitate to criticize his friends or mankind in general. He reacted negatively to Coleridge's subtitle to his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which was called "A Poet's Reverie," be-

cause he felt the additional part of the title was a derogation to the full work, a poem that was the most affecting he had ever read and one that kept him upset for many days after reading it. He criticized in strong terms some of Wordsworth's poems in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, though he thought Wordsworth was the greatest poet then alive. He felt that the Preface to this second edition of the *Ballads* should have appeared as a separate volume because the comments by the two poets, although they were true, just, and new, tended to diminish the poems in the book.

The letters reveal how, though indifferent to the world, or perhaps because of this indifference, he could be chauvinistic and insist that English life was the best a person could lead. The letters reveal also how he gloried in his food and drink, especially delighting in the food called *brawn*, a mixture of chopped up parts from the head, feet, legs, and tongue of the pig.

Most poignantly the letters tell the story of the insanity of his sister Mary. Without her and her dreadful deed in killing their mother, his life would surely have been different. In writing of the deed to Coleridge, he stated it directly and candidly. Thereafter the letters abound with the terror of his situation, his dread over the recurrent insanity Mary had visited upon herself, and the delight she and he had during her months of perfect sanity, when they worked together. Their relationship was truly one of the remarkable ones of all time. He cared for her gently, established a pension for her in case she should outlive him (which she did by thirteen years), and during his later years as her fits of insanity came more and more frequently, necessitating her going to a house of detention where she could be better cared for, he accepted his fate with the philosophic resignation that had characterized his behavior throughout life.

Upon his retirement from the East India House after thirty-three years of

service, he delighted in his new-found freedom, which he said extended the length of his days to three times their former length, and he hoped that he would be able to adjust to all this new leisure.

On December 22, 1834, Lamb fell in the street, developed erysipelas, and died five days later. The last letter he wrote,

on the day he fell in the street, delightfully reveals most of the main interests of his life: he tells how while frying tripe he went out to fetch a book and lost it. He wants the recipient of the letter to locate the book at once or write that she cannot find it. He laments that if the book is lost he will never like tripe again.

THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON

Author: Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

First published: *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd, 1894 (enlarged, 1931); *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 1958

Fiction, drama, and most poems are the fables of man pretending, living in and expressing himself through the imagination; their symbol is the *persona*. History and biography are the record of man reporting. Letters are the voice of man speaking and as such the most direct and accessible of all literary forms. But their value as forms of entertainment or revelation is always in direct proportion to the outgoing qualities of the people who write them. In the truly good letter the writer's guard is down. He feels free to speak out candidly, informingly, colloquially, at times indiscreetly, and what he has to say may be passionate or painful, witty or sober, foolish or wise, according to the expression of thought, action, or mood. While we read we stand, as it were, in the presence of a personality. Even where literary skill is lacking, a personal turn of phrase, a touch of humor, some troubled musing on the state of man or flash of insight can convey a sense of life felt in all its immediacy and vigor. This is one reason why a collection of letters is sometimes more interesting and revealing than the most considered or frankest of biographies.

Unfortunately, however, literary men are not always the best letter writers. Their letters may be ponderous, as are Johnson's, sensible but austere, as are

Wordsworth's, theatrical and often insincere like Byron's, perversely self-conscious like Shaw's, thin and dull like Joyce's. Frequently, too, writers give the impression that they are addressing posterity, not their correspondents. Keats had the proper touch and tone for self-revelation illuminating more than the events of his life and his literary world, as did Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, and Emily Dickinson. Her letters, written with no thought of publication, to members of her family and to friends, display a sincerity that is sometimes touching, often painful, always revealing. In them we can trace the growth of the woman, watch the progress of the writer, and peer into the depth insights of a tremendous private sensibility, alert in its poetic responsiveness to life and art.

In 1958, the three volumes of *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* brought to completion both an extensive and an intensive program of literary scholarship and laid a solid foundation for all future studies of the poet. The overall project, one of the most important in the history of American letters, began in 1955 with the publication of Thomas H. Johnson's definitive three-volume edition of Emily Dickinson's poems, a collection derived from every available manuscript source and including all variant readings criti-

THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON by Emily Dickinson. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson. Excerpt reprinted by permission of the publishers, Harvard University Press. Copyright, 1914, 1924, 1932 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi. Copyright, 1958, by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved.

cally compared. As a companion work the same editor, with the assistance of Theodora Ward, prepared a similar edition of the Dickinson letters. Except for the not impossible but highly improbable discovery of significant new material, the canon of Emily Dickinson's poetry and prose is now as complete as research and scrupulous editing could make it, and the six volumes with their introductions and notes, supplemented by Professor Johnson's *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography*, afford one of the most nearly rounded and informing presentations we have of any American writer.

Although Professor Johnson was aided in part by the pioneer efforts of Mabel Loomis Todd, whose 1894 edition of the *Letters* preserved in print a number now lost or destroyed, the proportions of this collection testify to his own energy and resourcefulness. It is true that of the thousand and forty-nine letters printed, only one hundred or so appear for the first time; but of the total number about three-fourths have been taken from manuscript, and many abridged or altered in previous editions have now been restored to their proper proportions. As in the case of the poems, the arrangement is chronological, each letter being accompanied by notes giving its source, describing the manuscript, identifying the addressee, and explaining the attendant circumstances of its composition whenever possible.

These matters, however, are for the literary specialist. For the general reader there is the fascination of a character portrait taking shape in brief but revealing glimpses: the high-spirited young girl conscious of close family ties and alert to the bustle of the village scene, the Mount Holyoke student disturbed by religious doubts that were to perplex her all her life, the woman of acute sensitivity withdrawing more and more from the everyday world, and finally the impassioned recluse to whom the world of flesh, spirit, and art were one and inseparable.

Emily Dickinson's letters make clear

the fact that her retreat from the familiar world was more than the eccentric deed of a cranky old maid. To her friend Abiah Root she wrote that the shore was safer, but she preferred to buffet the waves of the sea.

To her, life itself was dedication, in her case to a sense of her vocation as a poet and to an acceptance of the burden imposed by the intense, personal nature of her art. Her "business," as she wrote to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, was "Circumference." Perhaps she dared to venture out into uncharted realms of eternity because she already knew the village with its brisk, practical bustle and concerns. In the later years of her life her letters were almost her only connection with the world on which she had voluntarily turned her back.

The stereotype of the New England nun is so ingrained in the popular imagination that many readers of these letters will be surprised by the variety and range of her contacts. The most interesting and revealing are those written to intellectual and literary friends like Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield Daily Republican*; J. G. Holland, at one time an associate of Bowles, later the editor of *Scribner's Monthly*; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a prolific writer of the period; and her Boston cousins, Louise and Frances Norcross. Perhaps the strangest gesture ever made was her turning to Higginson as her literary mentor. On April 15, 1862, she wrote to ask him whether he was too occupied to pass judgment on her verse. Was it, she inquired, alive? She added that she had no one else to turn to, that she herself was too close to her writing to see it distinctly. With the letter she enclosed four short poems and, in a separate small envelope, her signature in case he should wish to reply. He did. and in answer she wrote to him on April 25, 1862, the most revealing of all her letters:

You asked how old I was? I made no verse—but one or two—until this winter—Sir—

I had a terror—since September—I could tell to none—and so I sing, as the Boy does by the Burying Ground—because I am afraid—You inquire my Books—For Poets—I have Keats—and Mr and Mrs Browning. For Prose—Mr Ruskin—Sir Thomas Browne—and the Revelation. I went to school—but in your manner of the phrase—had no education. When a little Girl, I had a friend, who taught me Immortality—but venturing too near, himself—he never returned—Soon after, my Tutor, died—and for several years, my Lexicon—was my only companion—Then I found one more—but he was not contented I be his scholar—so he left the Land.

You ask of my Companions Hills—Sir—and the Sundown—and a Dog—large as myself, that my Father bought me—They are better than Beings—because they know—but do not tell—and the noise in the Pool, at Noon—excels my Piano. I have a Brother and Sister—My Mother does not care for thought—and Father, too busy with his Briefs—to notice what we do—He buys me many Books—but begs me not to read them—because he fears they joggle the Mind. They are religious—except me—and address an Eclipse, every morning—whom they call their "Father." But I fear my story fatigues you—I would like to learn—Could you tell me how to grow—or is it un conveyed—like Melody—or Witchcraft? . . .

Two Editors of Journals came to my Father's House, this winter—and asked me for my Mind—and when I asked them "Why," they said I was penurious—and they, would use it for the World—

I could not weigh myself—Myself—

This was the beginning of a correspondence carried on until her death. There is no proof that Higginson, a popularizer and a vulgarian, ever understood her or her aims; he later complained that he had never been in the company of one who drained the power of his nerves so completely. At the same time he seems to have realized her need for the kind of assurance he could give. It was he who

helped to shape the Dickinson legend when he called her his "eccentric poetess" and said that there was something "quaint and nun-like" in her appearance.

In the light of her seclusion and her evasive attitude toward the contacts of everyday experience, it is not surprising that the great events of her time, like the stir of the village world about her, go almost unnoticed in these letters. Her only comment on the Civil War was to call it an "oblique place" before its violence and horrors were brought home to her by the death of a soldier from Amherst. For her, all experience was personal, immediate, revealing, all the more meaningful if it could be snared in an apothegm. Nature she called a haunted house, art a house wishing to be haunted. On another occasion she wrote that we distrust Christ when he tells us about God the Father and turn away when he tells us about heaven; but we listen when he describes Himself as one "acquainted with grief," for we also are familiar with sorrow. On another occasion she declared that science will not entrust mankind with another world. In aphoristic mood she wrote that our chief tempter is memory.

As time passed, Emily Dickinson's letters tended to become more and more an extension of her poetry, so that it is often difficult to tell where the letter ends and the poem begins, as when she compared the ending of summer to the soft, creakless shutting of a door. Sometimes the two are one, whether it is written in stanza form or in prose. Also, many of her poems went out to the world enclosed in letters dealing at times with the most trivial matters, but more often cryptic with suggestion and meditated wisdom. In some cases the early drafts of her letters have survived, showing that she reworked them as carefully as she did her poems, to match her words to her ideas. Spirit, she said, can be moved or evoked only by spirit, never by flesh.

This edition of the *Letters* will not make necessary a revision of the known biographical facts or a corrected appraisal

of Emily Dickinson's position as a major poet. Rather, these volumes round out the picture of a complex but wholly understandable personality and allow us to trace in clearer outline the successive stages of development which transformed an extremely sensitive yet not remarkable young woman into an extraordinary poet. Whether she wrote in poetry or prose, Emily Dickinson was in all truth compos-

ing her "letter to the World." For this reason the best comment to make on her performance in re-creating the spirit in language is the thought she herself expressed after reading of the death of George Eliot, the hope that she who had experienced the eternal in time would receive the gift omitted by time as part of eternity's bounty.

THE LETTERS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

First published: 1963

From Hollywood in 1940, the year of his death, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote to Maxwell Perkins, his editor at Scribner's, that hardly any American fiction published at that time failed to show his influence. For this reason he felt that he was in some manner an original. Two years earlier he had written to Perkins that he felt neglected, that his reputation was being allowed to vanish because all his books were out of print. When Arthur Mizener's biography appeared, in 1951, the situation was little better. Now his books have been reissued and several collections of his letters are in print as the result of a reassessment enshrining him with the giants of the 1920's: Hemingway, Faulkner, and Wolfe. Fitzgerald wrote prophetically when he said that an author ought to write for the young people of his generation, the forthcoming critics of the next, and the teachers of generations.

The years between 1925 and 1929 had a stunning effect upon American fiction with the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Look Homeward, Angel*. Also in this decade appeared Eliot's *The Waste Land*; one may sense the influence of this thematically visionary poem in *The Great Gatsby*. With Hemingway and Wolfe, Fitzgerald recognized an essential affinity: the attempt to grasp the same feel of

an interval in time and place, shown in people. Our picture of this era becomes more intensely fascinating with every new biography and collection of letters about these three novelists and their editor, Maxwell Perkins. Fitzgerald wrote to him once saying that he must have a hard time trying to keep up with them, for Hemingway was in Spain, and Wolfe had reverted to an "artistic hillbilly." In their works and in their legends these writers consciously expressed a dynamic poetic image of their time. Of his own contribution, Fitzgerald wrote to Edmund Wilson in 1918, while still at work on his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, and stated that no other person could have written a story of the young people of his generation in such depth; and to Perkins he said later that at twenty-seven he felt that he had used up more of his personal experience than anyone else.

Edited by Andrew Turnbull, whose biography of Fitzgerald appeared in 1962, these letters provide a many-faceted view of that "huge season" and of the man who led "the gay parade." It was a time so bemused by itself that he later said the past was his for eternity. These letters show us the Fitzgerald of the St. Paul, Princeton, France, Baltimore, Asheville, and Hollywood years. As an insider who himself figures prominently in the letters (he was a childhood friend of Fitzgerald and the playmate of the

writer's daughter Scottie) Turnbull is well qualified to write about Fitzgerald and to edit his letters. Unfortunately, those to Fitzgerald's father and to his good friend Ring Lardner are not obtainable, but of those which are available, Turnbull has published half.

The organization of the volume is ingenious and imaginative. After a brief personal introduction and an adequate chronology, Turnbull opens with a large group of letters to the callow, romantic Scottie, covering the years 1933-1940. He next presents a brief group to Fitzgerald's wife Zelda (1939-1940). These letters provide an intimate view covering the dark years when Fitzgerald indentured himself to Hollywood to finance Scottie's education and Zelda's confinement in mental institutions. Of Zelda, he wrote to his daughter that the mentally disturbed are only visitors on earth, forever strangers carrying broken commandments they cannot understand. In a different mood he wrote to Zelda herself that he wanted peace and hoped for the right to save her, to allow her a chance. He endured in this same period the "dreary routine" and expense of his own illnesses. He felt that his reason for being in Hollywood was to make one last effort, even though he felt he had done better work. His debts to his agent, his publisher, and others were oppressive. He said that at one time there was always money at hand, but now that it was not seemed to him a kind of epitaph to his era.

In the letters to Perkins, many of which are among Fitzgerald's most provocative, an entire creative span is covered. Both as an artist and as a proficient hack, Fitzgerald discusses in generous detail the machinery of publishing and the stages in the development of his books; and his comments on the personalities and writings of his contemporaries are often brilliant. Much briefer sections are devoted to major literary friends: Hemingway, who finally betrayed him; Edmund Wilson, who set his intellectual standards; John Peale Bishop, who introduced him

to modern poetry, and Shane Leslie, who encouraged him to pursue his career as a writer. Other sections bring together letters to Christian Gauss, his teacher at Princeton; to Harold Ober, his friend and agent from whom he eventually became estranged, and to such society friends as Mrs. Richard Taylor; Mrs. Turnbull (Andrew's mother), whom he greatly admired and respected and who gave him the feeling of the continuation of life; and Gerald and Sara Murphy, models for some of his rich, romantic characters.

The volume ends with a section of miscellaneous letters to his family, to his school friends, to strangers who expressed admiration or asked advice about living and writing, to critics (James Branch Cabell, Gilbert Seldes, Alexander Woolcott, Malcolm Cowley, George Jean Nathan, Henry Mencken), to fellow writers (Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, John O'Hara, Thomas Wolfe, Budd Shulberg, and S. J. Perelman), and to movie people (Helen Hayes, Joseph Mankiewicz). Many other writers, including Dorothy Parker and John Dos Passos, and movie people, Shirley Temple and Joan Crawford among others, are interesting figures in the letters. This section provides the broadest view, from 1907 on.

By deciding against the strict chronological approach, Turnbull returns us again and again to focal events, and there emerges an impressive image of a complex, dual personality whose dramatic life, romantic in youth, tawdry in some instances, and pathetic in its "dying fall," strained his body and his creative powers to the breaking point. Eventually Fitzgerald came to believe that life cheats and defeats, and that the things that save are not pleasure and happiness but the final results that come out of the conflict. Unlike his other, more nearly autobiographical novels, his masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, is an artistically unified expression of his own disordered character, which could not hold two opposed

views at the same time without cracking up. In *The Great Gatsby* he discovered the depth of art, and the creative process, once mastered, became the most important thing in life after he found it. From one point of view, the letters to Perkins and to Ober constitute a work record that shows how Fitzgerald's mediocre and second-rate stuff (for *Liberty*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Cosmopolitan*) kept him from more important work and detracted from his reputation among serious readers. He felt that in his novel *The Great Gatsby* there was pure creative work, not the second-rate stuff of many of his short stories but work of fully held imagination of an earnest world.

Most of the letters have a polished literary finish that either proves Fitzgerald's fictive style was really quite spontaneous or suggest that his correspondence was with posterity. In contrast to the stiff letters of Joyce, Fitzgerald's letters run the gamut of human emotions and moods. They are frank, intimate, bitter, warm, gossipy, desperate, self-pitying, stoic, introspective, charitable, compassionate, irreligious, moralistic, kind, apologetic, grateful, and full of bizarre wit and humor. They remind one of the lively letters of John Keats or D. H. Lawrence.

Fitzgerald's disputes with Wilson, Hemingway, and Bishop over aspects of his private life which they publicized, with Perkins over Fitzgerald's estimation of other Scribner writers, especially the later Wolfe, and with Ober over money problems, reveal a great deal about all those involved. He writes often of the direct influences in life and literature upon his writing. He speaks of Compton Mackenzie, Keats, Norris, Conrad, and Kafka with rare discernment, and he never quite recovered from the impact of Spengler, whom he read while working on

The Great Gatsby. Also valuable are his reassessments of his own work; we witness the author's progress from an egotistical confidence in his first novel to a more mature confidence in *The Great Gatsby*. His various comments on the craft of fiction have a timeless relevance. He offered sound advice to young writers, whom he was always eager to assist, morally, critically, and practically. He once wrote to Perkins about a new writer named Ernest Hemingway.

Although he speaks of her, there are no letters to Sheilah Graham. But there is one moving letter in which he ends a relationship with a married woman. Like most people who squander time, money, health, talent, and friendships, he was lavish with advice. With the authority of failure, but with a Chestertonian aptness as well, he advised Scottie, for instance, about her schooling, reading, writing, and romancing, in effect saying that if she did the things that his generation did not do she would be all right.

His observations on the Hollywood of the 1930's—its writers, directors, stars, producers—indicate that he possessed the raw material to make *The Last Tycoon*, unfinished at his death, a major novel. Alternately elated and depressed as a script writer who aspired to direct his own movies, it is in one sense appropriate that he died in Hollywood; at his worst he hacked out strips of garish celluloid and at his finest he conjured up the image of America that the movies, potentially, are best able to project.

Reviewing *The Last Tycoon* in 1941, Stephen Vincent Benét wrote that Fitzgerald was not a literary legend but a reputation. Recent biographical and critical studies, the republication of his fiction, and the collection of his letters suggest that he may be both.

THE LETTERS OF JOHN KEATS

Author: John Keats (1795-1821)

First published: *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, edited by R. M. Milnes, 1848; *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne*, edited by H. B. Forman, 1878; *Letters of*

The letters of John Keats begin in 1816 and end with his death in 1821. They are very much a personal record, so much so that their publication in the nineteenth century occasioned notable critical hostility. The Victorians were shocked by these letters. Men like Matthew Arnold and even Algernon Swinburne stated that they were too emotional, and should not be presented to public view. Modern criticism has taken a completely different viewpoint; the love letters are acknowledged to be among the greatest of their kind and the passages on criticism are now thought to be major documents of Romantic aesthetics.

The correspondents of Keats were Benjamin Bailey (1791-1853), a friend to whom Keats addressed a number of letters with matters of importance from a critical point of view; Fanny Brawne (1800-1865), the subject of the famous love letters; Charles Armitage Brown (1786-1842), himself a writer; Charles Wentworth Dilke (1789-1864), a generous friend and admirer of the poet; Charles Cowden Clarke (1787-1877), an early friend and literary influence; William Haslam (1795-1851), a school-fellow friend and a financial supporter of Keats; Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846), a painter much admired by the poet; Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), essayist and an early influence on Keats and other writers of the time; Fanny Keats (1803-1889), sister of the poet; George Keats (1797-1841), a brother; Joseph Severn (1793-1879), the poet and diplomat in whose arms Keats died; and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), an admirer of his brother poet.

Throughout the letters there are many references to the great men who created the literature of England. Keats, although not formally educated in literary studies, was conscious of his heritage as a

writer. One of the great themes of these letters is therefore English literature itself, and Keats's relationship to it. He mentions the names of Shakespeare and Milton often, and he continually tries to orient his own attitudes and work toward the great works of the past. In writing to his brother he goes through a whole catalogue of poets and essayists, in the process showing his strong sense of belonging to a community of the literate. He reveals that he reads matter outside what might be thought of as the range of poetry: the works of Voltaire, Gibbon, and Rabelais. In addition to these he reveals that he is interested in and indeed familiar with the work of Swift among the older writers, and with the whole spectrum of literature in his century: Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Hunt, Scott, and Hazlitt. Keats mentions these men and others often, and generally he reveals the operation of a strong critical sense. He tries not only to understand what these writers represent, but in what ways he himself can come to terms with them as a writer.

Shakespeare is certainly one of the great to whom his letters make important reference. In a significant letter of 1818 he states that he can read and understand Shakespeare "to his depths." The importance of Shakespeare to Keats was profound; he classified him as among those ultimate realities of life, like the existence of the sun and stars themselves.

If the letters have a good deal to say about Keats's vocation, they have perhaps even more to say about his feelings. The letters to Fanny Brawne express many things: perhaps the most constant themes are the depth of his love, his feelings of inadequacy in that love, and the sense he attains of the meaning this love has in establishing new conditions for his existence. Keats admits that his contemplation of Fanny prevents his obsessive preoccupation with himself: with his ego, his

work, and, ultimately, with his death. The luxuries over which he broods are, he says, the beauty of this woman and the hour of his death. The letters are not full of elaborate, reasoned, and eloquent statement, but give the appearance of the irresistible, disordered, and even hasty expression of deep feelings. They move very rapidly from expressions of joy to those of sadness, from talk of self to discussion of things more abstract. There is a good deal of news in these letters, even of gossip. Keats's own phrase describing his state is that of "uneasy spirits," and the letters convey these feelings directly and forcefully. There is a strong element of consciousness in these letters. Keats strives to create for the object of these letters the tone and appearance of the world through which he moves, and of the things which he experiences.

The letters to his friends reveal a strong sense of the obligations of friendship. It is one of the great topics to which he returns again and again. He asks forgiveness time after time for putting the demands of art ahead of those of friendship, and he states the impossibility of rationally dividing himself between the art of writing and that of friendship. He writes, with some pride, that he is glad not to be a burden to his friends. Yet, increasingly as the time of his death approached, he did become dependent on them for financial aid and for comfort of a less material kind. That they responded to his need is to their lasting honor.

When Keats writes about his friendships he continually takes a conciliatory and even humble tone. He begins by asking whether he can, in fact, allow himself to intrude upon his friends to the extent of imposing his problems, even his sense of self, upon them. Yet when Keats writes of his art there is a difference in tone. He has a firm conviction of the essential rightness of criticism and, even when writing about Milton and other figures in the Pantheon of letters, he is honest about what he thinks are their failings.

He believes, for example, that in many ways Wordsworth is to be preferred to Milton, because the former supplies a sense of "the human heart." Yet, to balance and give equal critical judgment, he adds that Milton was a much better thinker. In commenting on his own dedication to writing he said very strongly that he preferred his own criticism to that of others. Society mattered very little to him, and its opinions of art even less.

The letters have far more variety in them than the textbooks mention. They are in effect a calendar of events for Keats, in which he brings to his own mind and that of his correspondent the nature of those things which have affected his train of thought. They are in a sense both journals and letters, full of references to the dramas he has seen and the opinions he has formed about them; about the books he has read and the comparisons he has drawn from them; about the people he has met, and the way their characters have engaged him. Perhaps the outstanding trait of these letters is simply their universality: one letter to his brother, for example, covers everything from Freemasonry to fairy tales, and it is written in lively and expressive metaphors drawn from all the experiences of life. In fact, the letters are a kind of factory of language in that they reveal the same kind of experimentation with the possibilities of language as do the poems.

Throughout the letters Keats refuses to deceive himself. He does not hide the meaning of his brother's symptoms, and he acknowledges that this fatal sickness has its own place in the scheme of things. Perhaps the most famous letters deal with his awareness of his own approaching death; their rigorous honesty and insight are, one grants, unique. His wishes for death every day, a letter of 1820 admits, yet he wishes too that the pains of life might continue because they may be all he has. With almost scientific objectivity he considers the thought of his death, but wastes very small self-pity on it. As in

most of his earlier letters, those of his later life are centered not on the problem of the end of things but on their creation. The work must continue, and it must endure.

A summary of the meaning of the letters must take account of the complexity of their response to life. They are chronicles as well as criticisms, and they require attention to details as well as emotional

responses in their readers. Keats himself remarked that he may not have left anything immortal behind him, except the memories of his friends. He was wrong in his belief and statement. But he was right when he intimates that his friendships, of which his letters are the concrete expression, were themselves of tremendous importance.

THE LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

Author: Madame Marie de Sévigné (1626-1696)

First published: 1697; 1725-1726; 1734-1737; 1862-1865

The letters of Marie de Sévigné are thought of by many as the finest letters ever written. This large body of personal correspondence, about 1,500 letters in all, spreads over the whole of Madame de Sévigné's adult life. The first datable letter was written in 1648 when she was twenty-two, but at least one was written before she was married. Most of the letters, however, were written between 1671 and 1696, the year of her death. In 1671, Madame de Sévigné's recently married daughter, Françoise-Marguerite, moved to her husband's house in the south of France, where he had been appointed to a high governmental post. This was a great disappointment to the mother who with a more than common love idolized her daughter, and who had hoped the girl would live in Paris. During the last twenty-five years of Madame de Sévigné's life she wrote many letters to her distant daughter. Nevertheless, while most of the surviving letters are addressed to Françoise-Marguerite, a substantial number are written to Madame de Sévigné's wide circle of friends.

Madame de Sévigné's letters were much admired even during her lifetime; many were copied in manuscript and passed about privately in fashionable and intellectual society, but they were never published while the author was alive. However, as early as 1697, one year after

Madame de Sévigné's death, a branch of her family published its correspondence, and in this work a number of her letters were included. Then in 1725 and 1726 appeared abridged versions, and from 1734 to 1737 appeared a more complete but heavily edited edition sponsored by Madame de Sévigné's granddaughter. Finally, between 1862 and 1865, a complete and well-edited scholarly edition of fourteen volumes was published.

At first glance, the delight we find in the letters is largely a matter of their spontaneous art, their brilliant style, and their vivid reportage of the high society of Paris during one of the greatest periods of French history. Madame de Sévigné was a member of the best society, was an excellent observer, and had a fine eye for piquant detail. Yet if all the letters had to offer was brilliant reporting they would be merely interesting, not literary masterpieces. The quality that turns this body of correspondence into literature is not so much a brilliance of style and mass of detail as it is a matter of Madame de Sévigné's own personality and character, which are beautifully revealed, even dramatized, in letter after letter.

Madame de Sévigné was an elegant woman, a clear-sighted, well-educated, and profoundly sympathetic and humane person. Not the letters alone testify to this fact; all contemporary comment on

the woman agrees that she was as attractive and pleasant as she was virtuous. And she had a certain gaiety and charm that was irrepressible even in the most adverse circumstances. She had both a generous nature and a solidly practical sense of business: her heart and her head were in admirable equilibrium. Yet, as she herself said, her head was never the dupe of her heart. These qualities were manifest in her ability, throughout her life, to state and support her opinions and sympathies while remaining tolerant of people and causes with which she disagreed. For example, while she sympathized in her younger years with the rebellious aristocrats of the Fronde, she retained the respect and friendship of her friends at court; and while she read Pascal and the Jansenist theologians with admiration, she also admired the arguments and style of their adversaries; while being perfectly orthodox in her own religious beliefs and practices, she was a friend of the reforming and austere Jansenists. Even though she was an unswerving Catholic, she found it profitable and helpful to read Protestant books.

That the letters live because of their literary and human interest is true. But their historical interest must not be minimized. In effect, Madame de Sévigné's correspondence, particularly from 1655 to 1696, constitutes a kind of newspaper covering the court and high society in the Paris of King Louis XIV. But this record of events was not written by an outsider who observed from a distance. Madame de Sévigné was a woman of the court who participated in much of what she tells. She writes of events at the Louvre, at Versailles, at Saint-Cyr. She describes meetings with the king and his conversations. She tells of the great ladies of the time and of their salons. She has little to say about the political events and wars of the period but of important Parisian events she has much to tell us which can be found nowhere else. For example, she reports in great detail the trial and disgrace of the great Finance Minister,

Foquet; the marriage of the Grande Mademoiselle; the deaths of Turenne, Condé, and Louvois.

But it is not only of Paris and the court that Madame de Sévigné speaks. After her daughter's marriage she divided her time between the town and her country estates. Thus she often speaks of the day-to-day life of the people of both the town and the country. The common talk of the common people, and the success or lack of success of new books, what is playing at the theaters—all these things are part of her letters. She tells us about her travels, how friends are preparing a wedding, how a love affair is progressing, and what has happened to a peasant, the king's cook, or a gardener. In speaking of these things, Madame de Sévigné is neither coy, cruel, nor free with other people's reputations. Her object was not to gossip but to amuse and inform her daughter. Throughout the letters is seen her great maternal affection for the girl—an affection that, apparently, was not warmly responded to, and which was sometimes taken advantage of. Françoise-Marguerite was, it appears, quite spoiled.

Another interesting and revealing theme frequent in the letters is Madame de Sévigné's feeling for nature and the countryside. It is not often thought so, but in fact the seventeenth century aristocrat spent a good deal of time on his estates; he had not yet become the courtly lap dog that he was to be in the eighteenth century. It is not surprising, then, that Madame de Sévigné, so sensitive to what happened around her, would note and record the nonhuman world and its nuances and beauties; she did so, however, with a precision that would not become usual until the early Romantic period. She speaks of the changes in the leaves, the subtle passage from one season to another, a delightful reverie under a huge tree, listening to a nightingale in the moonlight, and many other such experiences.

Finally, students will always be interested in Madame de Sévigné's fairly fre-

quent literary criticism. In her remarks we find two things: on the one hand we learn from this fashionable woman just what works were most admired by her age. On the other hand, we have from her an invaluable testimony to what it was that an educated, clever, and intelligent woman of the seventeenth century found at first reading to be good. This was an age when most writers about literature were academic critics who judged not like the general reader, by his tastes, but by the "rules" of neoclassical literary

theory. In examining the letters, we find that Madame de Sévigné's taste was not at all academic. She delighted in some work now largely ignored except in literary histories—the gallant novels of Mademoiselle de Scudéry and the charming but shallow verse of Voiture and Benserade. However, she also saw the excellence of Corneille, Pascal, Bossuet, and La Fontaine. Typically, though she did not care for Racine as a person, she was capable of admiring certain of his works in a most enthusiastic manner.

THE LETTERS OF PLINY THE YOUNGER

Author: Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (A.D. 61-before 114)

First transcribed: *Letters*, Books I-IX, 97-109; Book X, c. 111; *Panegyricus*, 100

Pliny the Younger, or Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, was the nephew and adopted son of Pliny the Elder, the author of the famous and importantly influential *Natural History* in thirty-seven books. The younger Pliny, like the elder, was a wealthy aristocrat who devoted himself to a public career. The younger Pliny's surviving literary achievements are mostly a result of his public life as a lawyer, and public administrator, and landed gentleman; he has left us only one of his many now lost orations, and ten books of letters. His letters are one of the three important bodies of surviving Roman correspondence, the others being the letters of Cicero and the letters of Seneca.

The tone of Pliny's letters is in a way a combination of the tone of the other two letter writers, both of whom Pliny admired. Seneca's letters are more like philosophic treatises and moral essays than they are like familiar correspondence. Pliny's letters, like Seneca's, are usually organized around a single serious theme, are anchored by numerous moralizing asides, and were, in the surviving versions, consciously revised for transcription. Cicero's letters, on the other hand, have the familiarity and ease of genuinely personal letters. Again, despite his

similarity to Seneca, Pliny often gives us the impression of familiarity—the texts are full of intimate detail and personal observations—yet we always sense that the letters are carefully organized in their edited form to present us with the picture of a dignified, proper public gentleman.

Literarily, Pliny's style is an interesting blend. Pliny was the friend of Tacitus, whose writing he admired, and he was the pupil of the great teacher Quintilian. On the other hand, his literary hero was Cicero and he consciously modeled himself on Cicero. As a result, Pliny's writing is both Ciceronian and characteristic of the prose of the Silver Age of Roman literature. His flowing copiousness and his often classical vocabulary are strongly reminiscent of Cicero. But in expression, use of neologisms, syntax, and figures of speech he is typical of the Silver Age.

The letters have come down to us in ten books. The first nine books, containing letters to various friends, present 247 letters to 105 recipients. These books were probably published in groups of three from A.D. 97 to 109. The order of the letters is largely chronological, and in his first Pliny claims that the texts were chosen at random from among his larger private correspondence. Critics, however, feel certain that the letters were carefully

chosen and arranged according to the principle of variety. The tenth book of letters, which was published and has been preserved separately from the others, contains seventy-one official letters to the Emperor Trajan. They were written about 111 when Pliny was Governor of Bithynia. Fifty-one of Trajan's replies are included with Pliny's letters. The tenth book was probably edited by someone other than Pliny. One of the chief values of the letters to his friends as has often been pointed out, is that they show a respectable and civilized and pleasant side of life in the second century that contrasts with the seamy and vicious sides recorded by the satirists Juvenal and Persius and the historian Tacitus.

Among the things Pliny most often discusses in his letters is his own virtue and distinction. He was extremely jealous of his good name and fame among his contemporaries, and was concerned about the opinion posterity would hold of him. We see Pliny describe his consideration for his modest wife (6.4, 6.7, 7.5), and for his slaves, for whose health interests and welfare he is very concerned (5.19, 6.3, 8.16). He is a model landlord (5.15, 9.37, 8.2), and a generous friend, to inferiors particularly. He helps them economically, providing a dowry for the daughter of his old teacher, Quintilian (6.32), and passage to Spain for the poet Martial (3.21) who, by the way, had written one of his most delicate and skilful poems in praise of Pliny. He helps his friends with his influence, soliciting official appointments and other considerations for them. Among his public good works, we find, were the endowment of a children's home (1.8, 7.7), a public library (1.8), and a school (4.13).

Much insight into the style of life of the Roman aristocrat of the imperial period is to be gained in reading the letters. Though wealthy, we learn that Pliny was careful in administering his income and estates (2.15, 3.19, 8.2), and we see his several villas and properties described. In one of his longest letters (2.17), Pliny in

great detail describes his house on the seashore at Laurentum.

In several letters, the literary tastes and efforts of Pliny are interestingly described (7.4, 6.17); from these letters we gain a broad view of the literary education and activity of the time. Further, in 8.20, 4.3, 6.31, and 8.8, we see the admiring response of a cultivated Roman gentleman to the beauties of nature—these letters do much to dispel the too common view that the Romans were a no-nonsense, practical race of engineers and soldiers. Finally, many of the letters give us information about Pliny's career as a public servant and lawyer. We learn of the intricacies of important trials and the lives and deaths of many important men he knew. Perhaps there is no better way to get the feel of what the Roman state was like under the emperors than to read Pliny's accounts of his daily official activities.

The tenth book of letters, that containing Pliny's official correspondence with Trajan when Pliny was Governor of Bithynia, holds unique interest. It is one of the best sources we have for the study of Roman imperial administration. Among the subjects of these letters are petitions to the emperor; provincial finances; the construction of public buildings such as theatres, temples, baths, aqueducts; and questions of law and religion that were contingent to Pliny's difficulties of administration.

Taken as a whole, Pliny's ten books of letters contain three texts of especial interest: 6.16, 6.20, and particularly 10.96. The two letters of the sixth book, describe in some detail the eruption of Vesuvius that buried Pompeii. These two texts were written to Tacitus who had requested information about the event so that he might include an account of it in his *Histories*. Pliny was a distant witness of the eruption, which, in fact, killed his uncle, Pliny the Elder. The elder Pliny's death is the main subject of 6.16. When the mountain began its activity, the older man, who was then ad-

miral of the fleet at Misenum, down the coast from Vesuvius, ordered a ship to row toward the mountain. He wanted to satisfy his scientific curiosity about the volcanic activity: also, he had asked his young nephew if he wanted to accompany him on the trip, but Pliny wanted to complete an essay his uncle had assigned him and declined the invitation. Once the ship reached the area near the volcano, the elder Pliny landed with a small party. Soon, however, they were trapped; the sea was running too high for them to re-embark. After a time the old man was overcome by fumes and died on the beach. Letter 6.20 gives a more detailed account of the eruption itself.

Certainly the single most important and interesting letter in the entire collection is 10.96, with its reply from Trajan, 10.97. Pliny's letter, the longest in the tenth book, concerns the problem the Roman governor had in dealing with the emerging and troublesome Christian sect. Christianity was spreading rapidly in Bithynia. It was an illegal religion because the Christians refused to practice the state cult along with Christianity. Pliny found the problem of dealing with this refusal perplexing, and he decided to write the emperor to ask his advice and to learn what the emperor's firm policy was in regards to Christianity.

Pleading inexperience with the problem, Pliny requested from the emperor information on how far he should go in examining, prosecuting, and punishing Christians; and whether young and adult, and male and female members, of the sect should be treated the same; and whether a recantation was sufficient grounds for dropping charges; and whether the mere confession of Christianity was a punishable offense.

Pliny then described the methods he had been using heretofore. When members of the faith were denounced to Pliny as Christians, he first examined them and if they admitted they were Christians, he asked them twice more if they were Christians, adding each time the threat of death. If they persevered, he had them executed; whatever the nature of their creed, he said, such obstinacy deserved punishment. Next, he described how he had dealt with anonymous denunciations by demanding that those accused propitiate the statue of the emperor and curse Christ. Those who did so were questioned no further, those who did not were punished.

But the Christians were becoming irrepressible, and Pliny could find nothing wicked or truly criminal in their worship. The worst thing about them, said Pliny, is their wild and excessive superstition.

His major concern, however, was the fact that the sect was spreading rapidly and among all classes; many temples were deserted. His opinion was that it might be disastrous to push too far the prosecution of Christians, considering how many people were involved; hence he wanted advice from the emperor.

Trajan's reply is short, terse, and sensible. He approved Pliny's methods, and agreed that it was best to leave a way open for the accused to deny their faith and thus be dismissed. He further recommended that the governor not look for Christians, but that if one were denounced and found guilty, the law must take its course. Accusers, by the way, must make themselves known and stand as witnesses, for to allow anonymous denunciation would be both barbarous and dangerous.

THE LETTERS OF ROBERT FROST

Author: Robert Frost (1874-1963)

First published: *The Letters of Robert Frost to Louis Untermeyer* with a commentary by Louis Untermeyer, 1963; *Robert Frost and John Bartlett: The Record of a Friendship*, edited by Margaret Bartlett Anderson, 1963; *Selected Letters of Robert Frost*, edited by Lawrance Thompson, 1964

In 1912, when Frost left teaching at the New Hampshire State Normal School in Plymouth to take his family to England in search of seclusion and more time to write, he was thirty-eight years old and all but convinced that, as a poet, he would never be a success. His first two volumes, *A Boy's Will* and *North of Boston*, had been published in London before he returned to America in 1915. The American edition of *North of Boston*, published with sheets imported from England, had been favorably reviewed in the *New Republic* by Amy Lowell and by Louis Untermeyer in the *Chicago Evening Post*. Soon after his return Frost undertook the public appearances which, continuing throughout his life, contributed so much to the legend that grew up about him as the cracker-barrel philosopher beloved for his homely wit and benevolent charm, the same man who was excused from leading chapel exercises when he was teaching at Pinkerton Academy in Derry, New Hampshire, because the prospect of such an ordeal so obviously terrified him. But he needed the twenty-five or fifty dollars he got for each reading; and he realized that letting the public see him would establish more firmly the literary reputation he had worked and waited so long to achieve.

Mountain Interval, a third volume of poems, was published in 1916; and the following year Frost, who, as he put it, had run away from two colleges, accepted a teaching appointment at Amherst College where he continued until 1920, the year he sold his Franconia, New Hampshire farm and moved his family to another in South Shaftsbury, Vermont. Prizes, honors, other teaching appointments followed fast. Yet, in a sense, his difficulties were just beginning. The world intruded on his time; teaching, while it enhanced his financial independence, curbed his freedom to work; the lecture platform drained nervous energies he would have preferred to use for writing. To keep his equilibrium as he continued the search for his own poetic idiom was not easy. He was providing,

moreover, for a sizable family (two children had died; four remained), as well as coping with the vicissitudes of domestic life. It is against this background of long neglect followed by sudden acceptance, of complicated and increasingly burdensome personal responsibilities, that his letters must be read.

Until the pressures of growing fame nudged him too sharply and too often, Robert Frost wrote letters chiefly because doing so gave him pleasure. Later, resolving to write no more letters of obligation, he threatened to wait until he wanted to say a particular thing in a particular letter to a particular person if he had to wait till the Second Coming. What, he wanted to know, did he get into writing for if it wasn't for fun? That is not to say that when roused by resentment, or the need for a forceful rebuttal, he could not construct a letter as carefully as he felled a tree on his farm or built a stone path across the bog in his meadow. The construction itself was part of his fun. Since working with words so obviously delighted him, his letters, like his poems, are the reader's delight as well, even when it must be that happy-sad blend Frost once spoke of as belonging, in the nature of things, to the final phrase of a poem.

In his intimate letters Frost liked to play with words as a retriever plays with a ball, used hyperbole almost as often as metaphor, and could give his lyric-dramatic imagination free rein with brilliant effect. Such letters may not be taken literally. Like poems, they simply are, and they make their own truth. Over a period of years, as he later confessed, he deliberately wrote letters to a certain correspondent in such a way as to keep the over-curious out of the secret places of his mind. It is not surprising that the poet who was of two minds about the statement that good fences make good neighbors should have hinted, in another poem, at the propriety of not exploring too deep in others' business. Yet these letters of Frost's are now being deeply explored by those who wish to distinguish

between the Frost the American people loved and thought they knew, and the Frost who, much of the time, was acting a part he had consciously chosen to play. But if, for the purpose of protecting his privacy, Frost often threw dust in people's eyes, he did not fool himself. He knew very well that petty resentments influenced him inordinately; that he sometimes resorted to deceit for more selfish purposes than to shield himself from those who would pry. Other reasons, too, make it difficult to read the man through his letters, for in Frost extreme opposites mingled. Arrogance was balanced by self-doubt; violent rages, by serene acceptance. Bad feeling he himself had advertised could end in the truly humble wish to make amends and be forgiven.

John T. Bartlett and his wife, Margaret, were both students of Frost at Pinkerton Academy—as he told them later, the best and next best pupils he ever had. From England he wrote frequent, warm-hearted letters to Bartlett, and it was to him that Frost explained in 1913, after the publication of *A Boy's Will*, his theory of versification—what he called “the sound of sense.” The sound of their talk, Frost said on another occasion was what first roused in him a conscious interest in people. More than once to Bartlett, and to various others among his correspondents, Frost described, with illustrations, what he meant by the poet's need to learn how to get cadences by skillfully breaking the sounds of sense, with all their irregularity of accent across the regular beat of the meter. Although generous with advice to the young Bartlett, of whom he was very fond, Frost treated him much of the time as an equal, an easy, relaxed fellowship which gives the Bartlett letters particular significance. Only Bartlett's death in 1947 terminated their friendship.

The correspondence with Louis Untermeyer, beginning shortly after Frost's return from England and covering a period of forty-seven years, is even more revealing. No other friend, Frost told him,

had released him to such letter writing. Mutual trust, affection, and respect, added to their common concern for poetry, made it possible for Frost to speak more freely to Untermeyer than to anyone else of other writers then being published, and of his own artistic and personal life. From the first Frost wanted to be on emotional, rather than intellectual terms with Untermeyer, so that nothing would matter to them more than the fact that they were friends. The selfportrait of Frost emerging from such a relationship, taken with Untermeyer's comments, provides an invaluable basis for understanding him both as poet and man.

With Lawrance Thompson's selection, which includes some of the best letters to both Bartlett and Untermeyer, the process of discovering the real Frost, which began with the publication of the earlier volumes, is continued and extended. Thompson, who in 1939 accepted Frost's invitation to be his official biographer, chose, from more than fifteen hundred letters examined, five by the poet's parents; 466 from Frost to 123 individuals; forty addressed to Frost by thirty-four correspondents; and fifty-five about Frost written by thirteen persons, most particularly those by his wife, Elinor M. Frost. Thompson also prepared a chronology of Frost's life, a genealogy, and a selective index. Presented in strictly chronological order, and arranged so as to divide Frost's life story into ten chapters, the letters present as complete a portrait as possible of the man, his work, and his life: facts, events, friendships, enmities, circumstances, obsessions, commitments, family crises, habits, ideas, prejudices, theories, and practices. The whole may be read as an autobiographical narrative, one which provides the raw material for evaluations by any who wish to create their own biographies before the formal life studies appear.

Like any impressive body of writing, these letters are bound to be studied, and what they demonstrate, as much as anything, is that Robert Frost, in the sense of

his own definition of it, had style. Coming unmistakably from the same piece of cloth as the poems, they are the product of an orderly, quick mind with an unfailing talent for seizing the right detail: and of the same cultivated ear. Imaginative hearing, Frost declared, rather than imaginative seeing, ought to be the basis for poetry. And the style, he felt, was considerably more than the man: it was out of man's superfluity. In a letter to Louis Untermeyer he defined it as the way a man carries himself toward his ideas and deeds. In all of his letters, whether he sulked, grieved, or exulted, whether he was writing to his friend, his publisher, his grandfather's lawyer, or his son, Frost carried himself in a way he made entirely his own. After reading the letters one does not wonder that he was not amused that Amy Lowell thought he had no sense of humor.

If Frost's struggle to succeed as an artist made his conduct as a man appear wayward, it is clear from the full range of his letters that he was always devotedly and warm-heartedly close to his family. When his children were grown and away, his loving thoughts and letters reached after them. He visited and sent presents to his sister Jeanie after she was confined in an institution for the insane. He watched his daughter Marjorie dying of puerperal fever. Another married daughter, Irma, had to be hospitalized because of insanity. In all his traveling he was never separated for long from his wife, whom he described as the unwrit-

ten half of nearly everything he wrote. Not long after she died suddenly of a heart attack, the suicide of his only son made Frost feel that he had failed as a father. Forty-four honorary degrees here and abroad, four Pulitzer prizes, and a galaxy of other honors could be no compensation for such losses. A letter he wrote to *The Amherst Student* in 1935 provides the best explanation of how he managed to survive. Anyone who has achieved form, he said, whether it be letter, basket, garden, room, picture, or poem, is comforted. Certainly Frost needed, if anyone ever did, this protection—a stay, he called it, against confusion.

It may not be possible to know Frost completely from his letters. He pretended sometimes, but he always kept under cover the details of his wretchedness. From the twelve-year-old schoolboy's loving notes to Sabra Peabody, a girl in his class at school, to the dying man's letter, dictated nearly seventy-seven years later, to G. R. and Alma Elliott, his letters are impressive, not only for their intrinsic interest, but also because of the stature of the man who wrote them. A biography may extend understanding, but it will always be possible, through the body of the letters, to become well acquainted with a man thoroughly alive with the sensibility of an artist, the activity of an excellent mind, the trials of a truly remarkable human being, not to mention the mischievous wit, the mulish independence, and the sheer cussedness of a Yankee.

THE LETTERS OF THOMAS GRAY

Author: Thomas Gray (1716-1771)

First published: 1835

The publication of "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" in February, 1751, was largely responsible for Thomas Gray's becoming known to his contemporaries as the greatest living English poet; and yet his fame rested on a mere handful of poems, composed slowly, revised over a

period of years, and published with the greatest reluctance by the author, chiefly at the instigation of his friend and effective literary adviser, Horace Walpole. Indeed, despite his literary renown Gray lived as a near recluse at Peterhouse and Pembroke Colleges, Cambridge, from the

age of twenty-six to his death at fifty-five in 1771. It is said that the undergraduates at the University flocked to catch a glimpse of him on the rare occasions of his public appearances.

Given his habits of withdrawal and seclusion, it is fortunate that we have such an enduring record of the life and character of the poet as his collected letters provide. They are for the most part personal and unself-conscious, addressed to friends of long standing—in no sense public documents, but revealing a detailed picture of his personality, his interests, and the facts of his life.

A striking characteristic of the letters as a whole is the quiet testimony they give to the erudition of this gentle man. The eminent scholar William Temple attributed to Gray an extensive knowledge of natural and civil history, antiquities, criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, the arts, architecture, gardening, and voyages. This learnedness is nowhere obtrusive in the letters, but permeates and enriches a reading of them. Because he spent most of his life in what we would call "pure" research, Gray's scholarship was as natural and familiar to him as the conditions of the weather, and both topics receive equally loving and casual treatment in his writing.

Though he never took an active part in political matters, Gray was well-informed about contemporary events, and he had an active and gossipy interest in them. He shows a lively humor and charming wit in minding his neighbors' business, whether describing the coronation of a king, discussing the selection of a pope, predicting the results of an election, or teasing a friend about the friend's wedding; and he is likely to cap any contemporary allusion with an apt line from Latin or Greek literature.

This love of classical studies and antiquity was an essential part of his personality, and along with it went a deep interest in the antiquities of Britain. Gray became greatly excited when MacPherson produced the alleged Old Erse epic of

Ossian; in letters to several people he discusses this work, puzzles over its genuineness, and rejoices in its Gothic wildness and primitive mystery. His poems, "The Bard" and "The Descent of Odin" are products of that same interest in British antiquities.

Literary criticism appears informally through the letters, for Gray was also well-informed about the intellectual trends of his time. He was familiar with, and comments familiarly upon, the lives and works of such figures as Voltaire, Rousseau, Swift, Dryden, Hume, and Shaftesbury. Opinions upon the theater and opera of the eighteenth century are also to be found in the letters. But of formal criticism he produced little. Gray has been accused of a learned dilettantism, and it is true that his serious researches were consumed in numerous never-published fragments and notes for erudite but obscure studies in the classics.

Descriptions of scenery and landscapes appear frequently in his correspondence, particularly in the series of letters he sent to England while on a European tour with Walpole, 1739-1741. They visited France, Switzerland, and Italy, where Gray was impressed by the fashionable society of the cities, the poverty he saw on the land, and particularly by the wild and majestic prospects afforded by travels in the mountains. We see in Gray's letters an early example of the fascination with the "picturesque" and the "sublime" of the wildest aspects of nature that was to become so important later to Romantic writers.

That same tour occasioned a quarrel between Walpole and Gray that estranged the pair for several years; the only break in a life-long friendship. It is suggested that Gray's relative poverty and dependent position, along with Walpole's perhaps unconscious autocratic temperament and more cosmopolitan interests, were responsible for the disagreement.

Certainly Gray in general preferred solitude to society. His seclusion and aloofness made many people think him

prim, proud, and over-fastidious, but it is more probable that his withdrawal was a defense against situations in which he could not be at ease, and involvement in society alien to his tastes. He lived celibate and throughout her life was devoted to his mother, who suffered the early deaths of eleven of her twelve children and the brutality of an eccentric, alcoholic husband. These early experiences left Gray a hypersensitive and timid man, yet he had a capacity and need for at least a few deep and lasting friendships.

In the school days at Eton, he became one of a "Quadruple Alliance" of quiet boys, along with Walpole, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West. West's early death was profoundly upsetting to Gray, but the remaining three maintained their friendship and correspondence throughout their lives. The other most important of Gray's friendships were with James Brown, Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge; William Mason, a minor poet and playwright who later became Gray's literary executor; and the physician Thomas Wharton, Gray's closest friend and most faithful correspondent. Gray's letters to Wharton are among the most affectionate and charming of all his pieces. It was to Wharton, too, that Gray sent a journal that he kept during the latter years of his life, recording the weather, his activities, his rambles in the countryside, even a recipe for dressing perch, for the benefit of Mrs. Wharton. Also worth mention are the letters addressed to Norton Nicholls, a young clergyman, in whose friendship we see Gray's kindness and sympathy for young people. The letters to Nicholls are entertaining and playful but have a delicate dignity that never patronizes.

In spite of these warm friendships, Gray was often despondent and melancholy. He writes to Richard West of two kinds of melancholy, white and black—one being a mild ennui and dejection, the other a deep despair—and says he suffers frequently from both. Gray was constantly examining the state of his own

psyche and worrying about his relationships with other people. He would fall into deep depressions because he felt his life to be useless, realized he was doing nothing. At the same time he was temperamentally incapable of taking a more aggressive role in the world from which he retreated. Never robust, he worried a great deal about his health, and his letters often contain detailed accounts of his physical and mental states. A general fussiness over small things perhaps accounts for these tendencies toward mild hypochondria and self-doubt, as well as for his interest in the niceties of furniture, decorating, and gardening. He occupied himself with these details to avoid coming to grips with larger problems.

This is not to say that he was petulant and pompous. The ebullient spirits of his youthful letters gave way in maturity to a quiet, ironic, and sometimes sarcastic humor, whose wit was as often directed against himself as against others. It is common to find in his letters, after a slightly rhapsodical passage of serious description or philosophy, a short ironic comment about his fine rhetoric and sentiment. He had a lively sense of the ridiculous and was not loath to puncture his own dignity where it was becoming too solemn.

Gray's letters are particularly valuable for the insight they provide into the man's attitude toward poetry, in both theory and craftsmanship. His extreme reluctance to publish his poems and the modesty with which he regarded their appearance are clear in his correspondence upon the subject. The famous "Elegy" was finally brought out in 1751 by the publisher Dodsley, to prevent an unauthorized version from appearing in a magazine; a letter from Gray to Walpole at this time tells how unhappy he is to be forced to publish his poem. Two years later, when Dodsley was preparing a volume of six of Gray's poems at Walpole's instigation, Gray was horrified to learn that a portrait of himself was to appear as a frontispiece, and he positively forbade

its reproduction; he also insisted that the title be *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray*, rather than, *Poems by Mr. T. Gray, with Designs*. . . .

Gray seemed to fear both public ridicule of his scant production and also uncritical public acclaim, for his deep distrust of mass opinion on such matters amounted virtually to misanthropy. The competitiveness and demand for attention implied in publication went against the grain of his solitary temper; in fact, when he was offered the Laureateship of England at the death of Colley Cibber in 1757, he refused it, comparing the office in a letter to William Mason to that of Rat-Catcher to the King. He accepted, however, the post of Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1768, an office which required no duties, and which he held until his death three years later.

Gray took poetry seriously, however,

and he discusses its nature in various letters. He thought that the lyric was the best medium for emotional communication, which for him was poetry's primary reason for being. To this end, he felt poetry should have as a prime subject the beauties of nature, and leave intellectual speculation to philosophy. But while he refused the strict rules imposed on eighteenth century poetry in general, he still wanted a grave decorum and moderation to characterize the art.

In all, Gray was simultaneously torn between the desire to accomplish something in the world by leaving a name to posterity through his poetry, and an extreme distaste for the publicity that necessarily would accompany such fame. The struggle within his mind escapes into his letters, and through them we obtain an intimate and fascinating portrait of the character of this extraordinary man.

THE LETTERS OF THOMAS WOLFE

Author: Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938)

First published: 1956

Sooner or later nearly every major world figure is destined to be represented by a volume of his collected letters, whether or not there is a reason for publishing them. In *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe* there is enough fresh material to show Wolfe's personality in some new lights if not in a different perspective, particularly in such matters as his early efforts as a playwright, complicated family relationships, his conduct under pressures of the literary life, friendships that usually ended badly or in uneasy reconciliations, restless wanderings that were journeys of both discovery and escape, and on several occasions the touch-and-go combination of attraction and wariness that marked his relations with women.

There were in effect two Thomas Wolfes. One was the Asheville stonecutter's son who inherited his father's giant

frame, his tremendous appetites, his taste for invective and rhetoric, the awkward mountain boy who grew up in his mother's boarding house, the Old Kentucky Home, among swarming, bickering brothers and sisters who had little time for the youngest of the brood. Because he was the youngest, he was often the outsider looking on in this household of divided loyalties and grudges—at his father and mother who were always in the middle of some bitter, unresolved conflict of wills, at the boarders who came and went season after season.

This was the Wolfe who developed a sharp eye for the eccentricities and contradictions of human nature and a keen ear for the idioms of American speech; the richly talented novelist who filled the death scene of old Gant with symbolic meaning and plumbed the disillusion-

ment and disappointment the big city holds for the provincial mind; the remorseless realist who wrote with love and hate about his violent, ranting father, his scolding grasping mother, his frustrated sister Helen, his pathetic brother Ben; the regional chronicler of mountain life and legend in tales about Pentlands and Joyners in the hills of Old Catawba; the satirist who touched with comic exaggeration George Webber's experience as a teacher among students with the souls of certified public accountants in "The School for Utility Cultures"; the moralist contemplating George's discovery of the emptiness of fame. His gift for character was unsurpassed in his generation, and figures like old Gant and his wife Eliza are permanent properties of our imagination.

The other was the Wolfe who dramatized his every thought and action and made himself the hero of the books he wrote. Although he was to call himself Eugene Gant and George Webber, he was always the same autobiographical character who also grew up in his mother's boarding house, knew the loneliness of the misunderstood child in a house full of older brothers and sisters, revolted against the narrowness and pettiness of their meager lives, found his escape in poetry and adolescent dreams of fame, went away to college, failed as a playwright, and then in his novels tried to capture the vastness and energy of the whole American continent in a net of rhetoric. He projected himself in the romantic image of the eternal "I" against an indifferent, materialistic world, and when his vision failed he tried to sustain himself with a torrential flow of words. This was the master of lush prose, a lover of swollen rhetoric pilfered from the classics he ransacked to feed his hunger for the living word. In loneliness and despair, in a hundred rented rooms in London, Paris, New York, and Berlin, he wrote ceaselessly in his ledgers about all that he had ever known of the land and its people.

In *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, superbly edited by Elizabeth Nowell, these two figures meet and often merge. As a letter writer Wolfe exhibits the same intensity found in his fiction, the same straining and melodramatic, uncontrolled super-energized prose to be seen in *Look Homeward, Angel* and *Of Time and the River*, and if there exists doubt that his novels are nearly pure autobiography, one need only look to this book to clear that doubt away. Wolfe says again and again that he does not want to edit his own work; he seems obsessed with the flat reporting truth of his life and insists that cutting and "polishing" would (not *could*) destroy his complete project. From many of the letters one learns at first-hand, as though peeking through a keyhole, of Wolfe's dependence upon his various fiction editors. Had it not been for the forceful and wise editing efforts of Scribner's editors John Hall Wheelock and, more importantly, Maxwell Perkins, Wolfe's work might have remained in manuscript form, closed off forever from the world because of his insistence on describing every detail of his life, whether important, trivial or irrelevant, in the fullest possible manner. The charge critics made that Wolfe's books were in reality the work of collaboration, that he was not capable of making them "work," not capable of selecting and deciding and thus fashioning the run of life's emotions and incidents into art (in a *Saturday Review* article, "Genius is Not Enough," Bernard DeVoto charged that Wolfe lacked discipline and for this reason, DeVoto felt, he was incapable of writing anything well without the aid of Maxwell Perkins) is finally proved accurate through direct statements to that effect in various letters included in his correspondence.

In a letter to Maxwell Perkins, Wolfe explains that he should do his own editing but in trying to do so he may find that he has added instead of deleted words; therefore others must do the work of revision and selection. And when he

has sent proof to John Wheelock, he states that a certain section Wheelock had advised shortening was not changed because Wolfe could not decide to cut and so Wheelock must decide instead. In still another letter to Wheelock, Wolfe says that the letters he has received from him show the work put into the book by Wheelock, and Wolfe thanks him for his labor. Such passages reveal the quantity of editorial "assistance" Wolfe's work required.

DeVoto's attack stunned Wolfe for a time, but as one sees from his letters, he soon took "corrective measures." Where some writers might have attempted to solve the problem through self-investigation in an effort to become more critically aware of their own work, Wolfe stubbornly rejected the charge and set to work to prove them wrong. To accomplish this end, he broke off with Scribner's and Perkins (over two hundred pages are devoted to this ordeal) and took up with Harper and Brothers publishers, proving his unwillingness to investigate his weaknesses. In an early letter to his creative writing professor, George Pierce Baker, of the Harvard 47 Writers' Workshop, Wolfe wrote that he did not have the virtue of taking criticism in his stride. He felt that to be a great artist one does not need to be able to learn from criticism and that criticism is not a necessary part of a great writer.

To Wolfe, writing was more than a profession; it was a vital way of life, the only means he had for justifying himself before the world. Actually, he had only one story to tell—his own—and that he tried to give universal meaning in his use of the symbolic pilgrimages his heroes make: the Southerner to the North, the country boy to the world city, the American to Europe. Many of these letters help to show the deeply personal meaning of his search. Eventually his vision expanded to take in all America, and in his books he attempted to express the vastness and energy of the American land within the experience of one man. Bit-

terly as he resented the charge, Wolfe was never far from literal autobiography in anything he wrote, but for most readers the line dividing fact from creation has never been very clear in his work. For this reason a book like the *Letters* was needed to detach the actual man from his fictional backgrounds and the tags of legend which clustered about him as his fame grew.

It occurs to the reader of *Letters* at this point that had Thomas Wolfe lived past the age of thirty-seven, and thus been allowed time to mature as a writer and to become something of a self-critic, the world might have found itself with yet another gifted and prolific reporter who would feel a responsibility for shaping his very accurate and sometimes profound vision of life, its circumstances, and the American land.

But Wolfe's letters are valuable in still another way which is perhaps more positive. Wolfe announced to Wheelock that he liked to write, rather than speak, the things that moved him deeply. Written, he could say them more clearly and keep them better. Here, it seems, is a key to why Wolfe wrote at all. It seems that (and this includes his stories and novels) he wrote to "keep them," that is to say, he treasured his life, emotions, sense perceptions to such a degree that he felt forced to record them forever on paper and thus make them forever available. It is well known that he preserved every page he wrote and stored them in packing boxes which he kept with him at all times, usually in his apartment living room. And many of the letters included in Miss Nowell's edition were unfinished and unmailed. He seemed to have to say "it," but then, operating under the same motivating force which caused him to write the letter in the first place, he found himself incapable of letting go of what he had said. It is not uncommon for painters to part reluctantly with their canvases; it is understandable, since there can be only one painting. But a writer can have copies made. Certainly publica-

tion ought to satisfy his need to "keep them." But, as some children will keep (if you let them) and cherish everything they find, Wolfe kept everything he could that came from his mind. This was not a strange or unnatural obsession, merely an immature "adjustment." Miss Nowell in *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, performed an editorial feat rivaling Perkins', these letters having been gathered from a myriad of sources, placed in chronological order, and, though the very important letters to his mother are not included (they have been published separately), nor were those addressed to his love of many years, Aline Bernstein (she had intended to bring out a volume and would not release them to Nowell), the collection provides a rather complete picture of a man who had not yet matured as an artist, a man plagued by a paranoiac fear of criticism, a man who nearly to the time of his death wrote consistently to a grade school teacher, Margaret Roberts, whom he felt was responsible for the launching of his writing career.

The chief impression left by Wolfe's

letters, in fact, is one of waste and unfulfillment—waste of energy because of the hundreds of false starts he made in his fiction, waste of talent because he projected himself prodigally in his novels yet fulfilled himself in none, waste of thought and feeling because of the intensity with which he approached even the commonplace aspects of living. These qualities make *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe* an important literary and personal document. If the collection does not illuminate a literary generation, it at least reveals a man.

But perhaps the real contribution this book makes is that once and for all it settles the question of whether Wolfe did his own writing or whether one must consider him a particular kind of collaborator. But whatever the debt, and all evidence points to the fact that it was considerable, we are left with great moments in rich books, and it should make little difference to us how the books came about. The world is better for them, and perhaps better even for the controversy which has for so long surrounded them.

THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM COWPER

Author: William Cowper (1731-1800)

First published: 1809

If we knew nothing of William Cowper except his poetry, we should be likely to picture him as a cheerful, witty, affable, and broadly humane man whose worst troubles faded before the pleasures he so abundantly found in life. Many of these qualities also appear in the man who emerges from a reading of the *Letters*; but beside the affability, the wit, the humanity, stands a person four times pushed beyond reason into insanity, more or less constantly in unmitigated despair, convinced that a vengeful God hated him and had ordained for him the eternal torments of hell.

Externally, Cowper's life was placid and secluded, partly because his temperament could not support the competitive-

ness and agitation of an urban society whose pressures caused three of his derangements, partly because he found peace and consolation in the rural surroundings and quiet neighbors of Olney, the village in which he spent nearly thirty years of his adult life, and from which he wrote the largest proportion of letters which have been preserved.

Born in 1731, Cowper was apprenticed to the study of law at the age of seventeen at his father's wish. Early letters and later reminiscences indicate that the young man put more energy into hunting, dancing, and writing literary essays for a group called The Nonsense Club than in any serious study of law. His awareness of the impracticability of a

law career for himself probably caused his first mental upset in 1752. Convalescing in Southampton at the home of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, William fell in love with his cousin Theodora. Her father forbade the marriage, and although her sister Harriet was one of Cowper's dearest friends all his life, he never saw nor spoke of Theodora again, and neither ever married.

The second period of insanity, in 1764, was caused by the pressures and worries about an impending examination for the office of Clerk of the Journals of the House of Lords. Three attempts at suicide and a complete breakdown sent Cowper away from London forever. A year and a half in an asylum cured him, after which he became a boarder with the family of the Reverend Morley Unwin, who became his closest friends. When the minister died in 1767, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin (whom he regarded, he said, almost as a mother) moved to Olney and began the life so vividly represented in his letters written from there.

Cowper's letters are familiar, sprightly, and cheerful, for he seldom indulged in communication of his despair. He considered his correspondence nothing but written conversation, certainly no more worthy of being called literature than the casual chat of acquaintances. The charm of the letters lies in this casualness. He frequently points out to his correspondents that he has really nothing to say; but after all, if the two of them were together in a parlor they would hardly sit in silence; therefore he will talk about whatever comes into his head. This habit of descanting on whatever rose to the surface of his mind provides us with informal descriptions of the life and occurrences about Olney: the furnishings of his "boudoir" (the little summerhouse in which he habitually did his writing), the perils of his pet hares, the cleverness of his spaniel Beau, the current condition of his garden, the discovery and killing of a viper in the barn, his favorite walks, the

conversations of his neighbors. Some of these incidents he turned into poems, and it is hard to say whether the prose or verse versions are more charming.

The most important of his correspondents for the period 1769-1785 were the Reverend William Unwin, son of Morley Unwin, and the Reverend John Newton, an evangelical minister very influential in Cowper's life, who collaborated with him in writing the well-known *Olney Hymns*. During this time, Cowper suffered his third derangement, brought about by the pressure of friends to get him to marry Mrs. Unwin. In his letters to Newton, Cowper's deepening despair can be seen; he lost his evangelical hopes and took on the sternest Calvinistic determination that he was doomed. He believed he heard the voice of God saying to him, "*Actum est de te; periisti*" (It is finished with thee; thou hast perished).

At the same time, he was writing some of his most delightful poetry, notably "John Gilpin's Ride" and "The Task." The publication of "The Task" in 1785 brought him a renewal of friendship and correspondence with his cousin Harriet, now Lady Hesketh. Her friendship was an unfailing source of joy for Cowper, and his letters to her contain the warmest affection and devotion.

The casual incidents of daily life were not the only subjects in Cowper's letters. Though he regarded politics with an attitude rather of patience than of curiosity, he kept well-informed about current events. He expressed opinions that the revolution in the American colonies was wrong because it went far beyond a struggle for lawful liberty, created a dangerous ferment in Europe, and might actually be the destruction of England. When the slave trade in England became an issue, Cowper took a serious interest in that, too; he was considerably upset when it was rumored that he favored slavery, and he took pains to express his opposition, even writing a few satirical poems against it. Similarly, the problems

raised by the incipient industrialization of England took on importance for him as he saw around him the poverty and misery of the lacemakers in Olney. Several of his letters contain indignant and compassionate comments on their fate, and when a candle tax that would fall harshly on them was imposed, Cowper argued vehemently against it.

But underneath both his everyday activities and his intellectual preoccupations, Cowper had a pervasive gloom and melancholy. He speaks in his letters of being always uneasy, inactivity making him dejected, work making him weary. He made continuing efforts to conceal his despair whenever he was in company, and to affect cheerfulness in writing. In the letters to Lady Hesketh particularly we can see his determination to minimize his unhappiness lest she worry about him. He frequently reassures her that there are long intervals between his fits of depression in which he is cheerful, even joyful, in spirits.

Cowper accounts for his becoming a poet as a defense against these blue devils of despair. The manual employments, such as carpentry and gardening that he tried at first could not keep his mind engaged, while writing verse absorbed it entirely and took him out of himself. Once started, poetry became increasingly important to him, and he was quite sensitive to criticism of his work. He writes to Lady Hesketh that, having commenced an author, he is "abundantly desirous" of succeeding as such; and he realizes that though ambition and diffidence compete for possession of his mind, the idea of gaining some distinction from his poetry was always an enticing one.

For his poetry to be appreciated gave Cowper much joy. In a letter to William Unwin in 1782, he tells how pleased he was that his tale of John Gilpin was making the whole world laugh. Innocent merriment, he observes, is so scarce in the world that it is a worthy thing for poetry to produce. But for himself, that merri-

ment is forced on him by the underlying despair, and he compares himself to a sailor on a tempest-wracked ship employing himself in fiddling and dancing. Four years later he writes to Lady Hesketh that the poet who can make the world lively has a noble occupation; sermons, he says, leave the world as fast asleep as ever, but verse he compares to a fiddle that sets the whole universe in motion.

Besides the light and humorous verse that was so successful, Cowper undertook a translation of Homer, published in 1791, which he regarded quite seriously, and over which he labored painstakingly. Allusions to it and its critical reception are numerous in his letters. Frequent also are comments on the edition of Milton that Cowper was to bring out, but which he had not completed by his death in 1800.

The last decade of his life was a period of ever-increasing anguish for Cowper. He had moved with Mrs. Unwin from Olney to Weston village in 1786. The following year marked his fourth period of insanity. Mrs. Unwin suffered a stroke in 1791, followed by a second, from which she never fully recovered. Cowper nursed her until her death in 1796. During this period of his life he wrote frequent letters to Samuel Teedon, a schoolmaster at Olney. These letters contain an extensive description of the encroachment of Cowper's total despair. Haunted by horrible dreams, he describes one of 1793 in which he seemed to be leaving his home for the last time on the eve of his "execution"; he wished to carry away an iron door hasp as a keepsake, but realized that the fires into which he would be thrown would only fuse the metal and increase his agony.

He describes the progression of his mental state from terror to wrath to rebellion to guilt and back to terror as inescapable as the doom he was certain God's contempt and abhorrence had prepared for him. He repeatedly heard voices reviling him, forbidding him to

pray, warning him that God would promise him redemption but would certainly damn him, offering sarcastic and ironic comfort and reassurance. These terrors, etched as if by acid into Cowper's soul, are related so vividly in his letters to Teedon that the reader grasps the extremity of Cowper's despair. The darkness grew deeper as his life came to an end, and

found its expression as well in his letters as in the awesome last verse of his final poem, "The Castaway":

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulphs than he.

LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Styron (1925-)

Time: 1945

Locale: Port Warwick, Virginia

First published: 1952

Principal characters:

MILTON LOFTIS, a lawyer

HELEN LOFTIS, his wife

PEYTON LOFTIS, their daughter, a suicide

DOLLY BONNER, a socialite involved in an adulterous affair with Milton

THE REVEREND CAREY CARR, Helen's confidant

ELLA SWAN, a Negro maid

LA RUTH, Ella's daughter, also a servant

HARRY MILLER, Peyton's husband

SCLATER (POOKIE) BONNER, Dolly's husband

LEWELLYN CASPER, a mortician

MAUDIE LOFTIS, Peyton's mentally retarded older sister

DICK CARTWRIGHT, Peyton's first lover

One may choose to see a paradox not as it reflects back and forth upon itself but rather as it appears in only one of its mirrors. Just such a single-mirrored glimpse of William Styron's first book, *Lie Down in Darkness*, reveals a novel which achieves some success because of an extraordinary failing, one which stems from a most startling source: the prose is too good.

If the prose were less good, the book could realize its own harmonic sense and avoid emergence as the lopsided, Miltonic work which deceives us. A proportioned book, however, would also become a lesser work of art because its own harmonic sense creates less good art than the harmonic sense which ought to accompany the prose.

In this novel William Styron concentrates on the temporal structure of the

plot, and on language; he uses no central character, for none of the people portrayed warrant his full attention. But because its plentiful imagery is clear and accurate, widely gathered and imaginative, both woven into minute detail and scattered among forcible phrases, the language uplifts its paltry players, and they dazzle us with a borrowed brilliance. In our blindness we take them more seriously than they deserve, for they are present in a truth which is not their own. When the writing falters, as it sometimes does (even in a single paragraph can be found excellence sprung from clumsiness), the reader is reminded that Styron is composing on a large scale. At such moments Milton Loftis and his family bulge within the protective prose and declare that their lives are of a particular rather than of a general interest. We

then watch them undergo their tiny torment with the same mild concern a friend might arouse when indicating the street in which he spent his childhood. His hauntings are not ours; but an artist can bring us to our own street when he brings us to his. Although the Loftis family was never on our block, Styron sings of them with the voice of our grandmothers.

The present moment of the novel is a day of burial, a day on which the universe takes no notice of Milton Loftis' tragedy. He awaits the arrival of his daughter's freshly disinterred body with pitiful surprise that the world's activity is not suspended in deference to his personal pain. As though to mock him, the hearse is stalled, ships noisily unload their cargoes, and coal gondolas screech and roar about their work. Port Warwick is busy with its everyday concerns.

This is the moment Styron will use as an anchor post in his game of temporal shifts. Past events spring up to invade the present, and past and present join their voices, one sometimes humming while the other sings. But always Styron is clear about the words; we always know to whom we are listening.

The story, pieced together from such a clever device, however, might better have been told in a straightforward narrative, for the ingenious plot construction serves the same fault as does the excellent prose. As told, the story is as complicated as a single event in any person's life usually is. Any reader required to describe his present moment would find himself gleaning the multifarious moments of the past to shed light on this seemingly simple present. But it is also true that such explication would be uninteresting except to the personally involved. It is the sign of an artist that his reader becomes personally involved, and in some cases he remains involved throughout his lifetime. But Styron's looming half-genius makes us deem his characters and their story more worthy of our attention than we would allow if they were stripped of his

protection. His talents as a novelist do not permit us to see them clearly until we are a safe distance from his deception, until we can touch them without being stung by his electrifying prose. This is not to deny the inextricable relationship among all the parts of the whole, but even three hundred years ago Brutus could be made to lament the need of Caesar's death for want of a similar separation.

What is involved? Milton Loftis is weak; the statement hardly needs saying. He is, if not alcoholic, dependent upon strong drink. His paternal instincts are adulterated with incestuous stirrings and his connubial duties stained with adulterous conspiracy. Indeed, there is nothing to redeem him for us, and we can only laugh, as does his wife Helen, at his political aspirations and at his pretensions to a poetic soul. And yet, so true is Styron's talent, we can sympathize with Loftis, and pity his pain, sometimes almost believing him in spite of what we know. It is no easy matter to separate the character from the prose, for Styron is not yet Faulkner. He uses no Vardaman to report his own observations.

Although it is Milton whom the reader comes to know best, it is Helen who is least protected by the writer. Her defensive hypochondria and religious fanaticism, her jealousy and abuse of Peyton, her unrelenting nightmares (insisting upon truth), and her neurotic need for a despicable husband all combine in condemnation. Even her devotion to her first-born, the mentally retarded Maudie, is no virtue in her hands, for she uses it as a weapon against her husband and younger daughter. And yet, she is more sinned against than sinner. Her innocent fault is that she is dull. Even Styron can do little for her.

As for Peyton Loftis, ironically animated with the vitality of youth, we hardly come to know her. Mostly we see her in the early part of the book through the astigmatic eyes of her parents. They seem vaguely to recognize that her exist-

ence is a sign of redemption from the accusing presence of Maudie. To her mother she is a cunning conspirator for Milton's affection; to her father she is a conspirator, almost sibling, against the watchfulness of Helen. By the time we enter her mind, we are handling a damaged parcel, diseased by the combination of her inheritance; there is no redemption after all. Peyton's suicide is seen as a relief from the tormented condition of her life, not as a tragedy but rather as an accusation directed against those who are too insignificant in their lives to warrant such opprobrium.

For the rest, Styron concludes his book with a mammoth religious meeting among the Negroes of Port Warwick. Since the Negro is so much a part of

Southern culture, it is appropriate that he has been present throughout the book. La Ruth commiserates with Helen while disgusting her, and Ella gently preaches to Loftis. They are a superstitious, ignorant people, gullibly enmeshed in the corporation of Daddy Faith; but when a child is lost during the baptismal rites, as Peyton had been lost all her life, they care for her and comfort her until her mother arrives. The sociological inferences are vague, but one feels that Styron is not through with them. The same train which brought us into Port Warwick at the book's beginning rumbles across the trestle on its return to Richmond, and we are sure that it will come back again, perhaps to tell a more important story.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CARDINAL WOLSEY

Type of work: Biography

Author: George Cavendish (c.1500-c.1561)

First published: *The Negotiations of Thomas Woolsey, the Great Cardinall of England, 1641; Life of Cardinal Wolsey and Metrical Versions from the Original Autograph Manuscript*, 1815

Principal personages:

CARDINAL THOMAS WOLSEY

HENRY DEANE, Archbishop of Canterbury

SIR RICHARD NANFAN, the deputy of Calais, Wolsey's patron

KING HENRY VII

KING HENRY VIII

KATHERINE OF ARAGON

ANNE BOLEYN

CARDINAL CAMPEGGIO, the Papal legate in England

George Cavendish was the eldest son of Thomas Cavendish, an officer of the king's exchequer. He was born about 1500, went to Cambridge University, left without taking a degree, and married in 1524. He entered Cardinal Wolsey's services about 1522 as his gentleman usher. He left Wolsey's household after the cardinal's death in 1530, refused an offer to enter the royal service, and went to live on his family estate in Suffolk until just before his death, about 1561. No evidence of the date of his death exists.

He undertook to write the biography

of Wolsey in 1554; he completed it in 1558. His purpose was to give the world the truth about the controversial cardinal. Cavendish, a Roman Catholic, felt the cardinal's reputation suffered from slander and Protestant distortions of fact. The work remained in manuscript until 1641, when a first edition appeared. The first scholarly edition was produced by Samuel Weller Singer in 1815.

The biography is an eyewitness account and its tone is moralistic. It attempts to show the fall of the great by the turn of fortune's wheel and the sin of pride. Most of the first half and all of the

second half of the book come from the direct experience of the author; other portions come from accounts by the cardinal himself and from Hall's chronicles. Among the factual errors in the *Life* are the misnaming of some people, some mistakes in the sequence of events, and certain omissions of the facts of Wolsey's personal life, such as the failure to mention Wolsey's noncanonical wife, his son, Thomas Wynter, and his intrigues after his fall. Cavendish never mentions Sir Thomas More, prominent during this period. On the other hand, Cavendish has a Renaissance eye for detail: gorgeous clothing, sumptuous banquets, and scenes of pomp and luxury.

Wolsey, son of a well-to-do butcher, went to Oxford, received his B.A. degree at the age of fifteen, was elected fellow of Magdalen College about 1497, and after graduating M.A. was appointed master of the school adjoining the College. He was ordained a priest at Marlborough in March, 1498.

In 1503, Henry Deane, the Archbishop of Canterbury, died. Wolsey then became chaplain to Sir Richard Nanfan, the deputy of Calais, who entrusted him with his money and affairs and commended him to the service of King Henry VII. In 1507, Sir Richard Nanfan died and Wolsey became the King's Chaplain and befriended Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester, and Thomas Lovell. In 1508, the king sent him to Scotland to prevent a break between the two countries. In the same year, sent as a special envoy to the Emperor Maximilian, in Flanders, he made the journey there and back with such speed that the king was much impressed. In 1509, King Henry, shortly before his death, made Wolsey Dean of Lincoln.

Under King Henry VIII, Wolsey became very powerful and was responsible for diplomatic intrigue playing France against Spain. In 1512 he accompanied the king in his successful campaign against France. In 1514, he was made Bishop of Lincoln. Later, after the death

of Cardinal Bainbridge, he became Archbishop of York. When the marriage of Charles of Castile and King Henry's daughter Mary was broken off through the duplicity of Maximilian, Wolsey secretly laid the foundations for an alliance with France which resulted in negotiations for the marriage of Mary and the Duke of Orleans. In 1515, Pope Leo X made Wolsey a cardinal. In December of the same year he was appointed Lord Chancellor of England. Wolsey worked hard in the king's service. Besides his duties as a maker of foreign policy, Wolsey helped in domestic affairs, putting down a riot on "Evily Mayday" and earning the gratitude of merchants and rioters, after he had twenty of the ringleaders executed and the others pardoned. In 1518, on the king's insistence, he was made Cardinal Campeggio's associate in England. In July, 1519, secret articles were signed by King Henry, Wolsey, and the French ambassador for the marriage of Princess Mary and the son of the French king and for the surrender of Tournay. A splendid embassy was sent to France. Cavendish describes in detail the magnificent supper and entertainment offered. Wolsey supported the French alliance in opposition to the nobles and Katherine of Aragon, King Henry's wife, who saw the interests of France opposed to those of her nephew, King Charles V of Spain. Although Wolsey's handling of foreign affairs was not successful, his downfall did not begin until his involvement in the Anne Boleyn affair. Anne was his enemy from the beginning. Cavendish insists that her attitude was unjust, for Wolsey acted according to the king's wishes. Anne was sent from France to be one of Queen Katherine's maids. Henry fell in love with her, as did Lord Percy, son of the Earl of Northumberland. The king came to know of this affair and asked Wolsey to intervene. Wolsey spoke to Percy of the king's displeasure, but Percy persisted in his love for Anne. Wolsey then sent for Percy's father and the affair was broken up.

From then on, according to Cavendish, Anne was Wolsey's enemy.

When the king and Wolsey went to France, Anne used Wolsey's absence to conspire with his enemies. Wolsey advised the king against marriage with Anne, but headstrong Henry persisted. Wolsey then insisted that the king bring the matter of the divorce before the Council. The case was argued, but the members could come no agreement. Commissions were then sent to various universities, and the king was advised to send all the opinions under various seals to the pope for his advice and judgment. If the pope could not come to any decision, he would be asked to establish in England a judicial court directed by Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Campeggio; the king and the queen were to appear before the two legates and be judged. Cavendish comments on the appearance of King Henry and Queen Katherine as "the strangest and newest sight and device that ever was read or heard in any history or chronicle. . . ."

The court was held in Blackfriars, London, where the two cardinals sat in judgment. Cavendish vividly describes the participants in this remarkable drama. When the queen was called, she rose, knelt at King's Henry's feet, and pleaded her innocence. If there were any cause against her, she said, she was to be banished. If none, she pleaded to remain queen. Then, committing her case to God, she left. King Henry declared that suspicion of his daughter Mary's legitimacy had been raised by the King of France because Henry had married his brother Arthur's wife and that the marriage itself was suspect. The next day the King's Council declared the marriage void because of the carnal union between Arthur and Katherine, but the queen's defenders insisted that the marriage with Arthur had not been consummated. The king sent Wolsey to try to persuade the queen to surrender the entire matter into the king's hands. Queen Katherine refused. All efforts of the court to come to a

decision were obstructed, mainly because the pope, a virtual prisoner of the victorious Charles V of Spain, refused to annul Henry's marriage to Katherine. Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Campeggio were unable to come to any decision. The pope, not in a position to antagonize the Spanish, called Henry to Rome for trial, but Henry refused the summons. Soon afterward he banished Katherine and, divorced, married Anne. Cardinal Wolsey fell into disfavor, was divested of all his possessions and gifts, was forced to surrender the Great Seal, and had to go to live at Asher, in such financial straits that he was forced to borrow dishes and cups from friends. At this time Wolsey was indicted for praemunire.

During this period, according to Cavendish, King Henry sent frequent messengers to Wolsey, asking after his health and giving him every assurance of the royal good wishes. Wolsey himself kept assuring the king's messengers that at no time had he offended his majesty or his laws, but that all his efforts were exerted for the good of king and country. Gradually Wolsey's retinue was diminished by order of the king. Then, during the Christmas season, Wolsey fell ill and the king sent his own physician, Dr. Butts, to care for him. Dr. Butts assured Wolsey of the king's good wishes. To remove Wolsey from his proximity to Henry, the King's Council ordered him to move to York.

Wolsey moved to Richmond. While at Richmond, he interpreted for Cavendish a carved image Cavendish had observed of a cow. Wolsey said the cow denoted a prophecy: when the cow rides the bull, then must the priest beware his head. The cow was King Henry and the bull Anne Boleyn and, with the marriage of Anne and Henry, the prophecy was fulfilled. Wolsey was given money to move on to York. At Cawood Castle, the Earl of Northumberland arrived with a Mr. Walsh. Northumberland led Wolsey to his chamber and there arrested him for high treason. Cavendish, standing outside

the door, heard the earl make the arrest. Wolsey refused to obey the warrant without the signed authority of the king. On being assured by Mr. Walsh that he did indeed have the authority of the king, Wolsey agreed to return to London to be tried for treason. On his journey back, Wolsey fell gravely ill. He was so sick that his journey was halted at Leicester Abbey. Here a messenger of the king, a Mr. Kingsley, arrived to demand of Wolsey fifteen hundred pounds which Wolsey supposedly had in his possession. Wolsey, extremely ill, begged leave to be excused and promised to satisfy the king's demand. But soon after, bitterly bewail-

ing his fate and protesting his diligent and faithful service to his monarch, Wolsey died. Upon his being laid out for burial, they discovered that he wore a hair shirt next to his skin. He was buried in a wooden coffin. Cavendish was afterward called before the king and asked about the fifteen hundred pounds. Cavendish told the king where the money was to be found. King Henry then asked Cavendish to enter his service, but Cavendish refused. Cavendish ended his biography with a comment on the mutability and vanity of human desires and the inconsistency of princely favor.

LIFE OF RICHARD SAVAGE

Type of work: Biography

Author: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

First published: 1744

Principal personages:

RICHARD SAVAGE, a minor poet and journalist and a friend of Johnson

THE COUNTESS OF MACCLESFIELD, the woman Savage believed to be his mother

RICHARD STEELE, the well-known essayist, one of Savage's patrons

LORD TYRCONNEL, another patron

Samuel Johnson is perhaps best known as the central figure in Boswell's biography of him but he was himself one of the earliest biographers to delve into the psychology of his subject. The *Life of Richard Savage*, which preceded his better-known series, the *Lives of the Poets*, by thirty-five years, is one of his most interesting works from this standpoint. While he follows a roughly chronological pattern in tracing the life of the rather pathetic "Grub Street Hack," Johnson relates in detail episodes which reveal the character traits that motivated all of Savage's actions.

It is impossible to read any of the works of Johnson's middle years, the periodical essays, "The Vanity of Human Wishes," or *Rasselas*, without becoming familiar with his melancholy yet compassionate outlook on human behavior. The opening paragraph of the *Life of Richard Savage* shows the reader the mind and

heart that could look upon Savage's improvidence, his pride, and his licentiousness both critically and sympathetically: "It has been observed in all ages, that the advantages of nature or of fortune have contributed very little to the promotion of happiness; and that those whom the splendour of their rank, or the extent of their capacity, have placed upon the summits of human life, have not often given any just occasion to envy in those who look up to them from a lower station."

Even gifts of intellect, less transitory than wealth or worldly power, are subject to the fluctuations of fortune, and it is the tragedy of wasted talent that Johnson traces in Savage's life. Johnson had long shared with his friend Savage the dreary hand-to-mouth existence of the aspiring writer, and he knew well the temptations of such a way of life. However, he saw the root of his friend's misfortunes in his unhappy origins.

Savage firmly believed that he was the illegitimate son of the Countess of Maclesfield and Earl Rivers and that he had been placed in the home of a nurse soon after his birth. He was in later life rejected and thwarted at every turn by his supposed mother; on one occasion, when Savage was in prison for killing a man in a tavern brawl, the countess even asked the queen to disregard the pleas of his friends for his pardon. Savage also accused her of telling his father that he was dead in order to deprive him of the inheritance that the earl left to his other natural children.

Savage made his accusations frequently and publicly; the countess claimed that her own child had died young, and most of her contemporaries, Boswell included, believed that Savage was the nurse's child. Set against this theory is the fact that the poet received an unusually good early education, which he told Johnson was paid for by Lady Mason, mother of the countess. For Savage, her interest was sufficient proof of his identity, and he told his story over and over again, complaining of the blows he had been dealt by fortune. In his mind, the world, and especially the nobility to which his faithless parents belonged, owed him reparation for his rejection and for the paternal inheritance of which he felt he had been cheated. He lived on the charity of others for most of his life, recounting his sad story to win the sympathy and the hospitality of the well-to-do.

Johnson, who seems to have accepted Savage's account of his birth, pictures this aspect of the poet's life vividly, giving the reader a sense of the personal attractiveness of a man whose conversation was so delightful that others were willing, at least for a time, to provide him with food and lodging and to endure his total lack of consideration for the comfort and convenience of his hosts. Johnson notes that Savage, who had never lived according to any schedule, never considered that others might have business to

attend to and heedlessly talked half the night away on many occasions.

In spite of Savage's charm, many would-be patrons were deterred from aiding him by his reputation for ingratitude. Johnson suggests that since Savage spent none of his energies in earning a living, he was a more than usually acute observer of men, and few traits of his benefactors escaped him. The minute he felt that his dignity had been slighted—and he was extraordinarily sensitive—he was likely to consider friendship at an end. A man who had been praised effusively in one of Savage's dedications one day might see himself the object of vicious satire and abuse on the next.

Richard Steele, author of *The Spectator* with Joseph Addison, befriended Savage, only to find that his protégé had been ridiculing his improvidence for the entertainment of his acquaintances in the London taverns. Lord Tyrconnel, with whom Savage lived for some time, broke with him in a violent public quarrel. Tyrconnel complained both of Savage's spendthrift habits and of the disorderly parties he gave in taverns, always expecting that others would pay the bill. Savage typically took great offense at Tyrconnel's demand that he "regulate his method of life, and not to spend all his nights in taverns." Yet with all the fury of the quarrel, Savage was apparently astonished to be banished from Tyrconnel's house. Johnson comments that "everyone that knew Savage will readily believe, that to him it was sudden as a stroke of thunder; that, though he might have transiently suspected it, he had never suffered any thought so displeasing to sink into his mind, but that he had driven it away by amusements, or dreams of future felicity and affluence, and had never taken any measures by which he might prevent a precipitation from plenty to indigence."

Johnson does not minimize Savage's faults, but he does try to moderate the harsh judgment of the reader by suggesting that even though Savage's misfor-

tunes were often the result of his own faults, his faults were just as often caused by his original misfortunes. Johnson found it hard to judge a man who preserved, as the preceding quotation shows, a child-like faith that he would be cared for.

Savage's only source of income, outside of the generosity of his friends, was his writing, which included several long, semi-autobiographical, moralizing poems of the kind popular in the mid-eighteenth century, and a number of pamphlets. Johnson reprints some of the poems with his own judicious, but kindly, criticism: "Of his style, the general fault is harshness, and its general excellence is dignity; of his sentiments, the prevailing beauty is sublimity, and uniformity the prevailing defect." Savage's faults, Johnson suggests, were often results of his natural indolence, his tendency to leave projected works unfinished or unrevised.

Savage's last months were the inevitable outcome of a life like his; his acquaintances, weary of his continual appeals for funds, raised a subscription and sent him away from London, to Bristol, promising him a small but adequate income if he would develop habits of fru-

gality. Naturally Savage continued his customary entertainments, and he was soon placed in debtors' prison. He was later moved to Newgate, in London, where he died. It is characteristic that he spent his time in prison composing a satire on Bristol, a piece calculated to anger his creditors; he optimistically wrote his friends that he expected to make enough from its publication to buy his release.

Johnson concludes his biography with a succinct character sketch summarizing the traits of personality that he illustrated in this account of Savage's life. He points out again both the virtues and the vices of his friend and draws his moral, that even great minds can be weakened, even destroyed, by hardship, and every man owes sympathy to those who combat fortune, for he himself might have failed had he been subject to the same trials. Sympathy, however, cannot stand in the way of Johnson's firm convictions about human responsibility. He intends his biography to show that "nothing will supply the want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible."

THE LIME TWIG

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Hawkes (1925-)

Time: The present

Locale: Somewhere in England

First published: 1961

Principal characters:

SIDNEY SLYTER, a columnist
 WILLIAM HENCHER, a Londoner
 MICHAEL BANKS, his friend
 MARGARET BANKS, Michael's wife
 COWLES,
 LARRY, and
 SPARROW, crooks
 ROCK CASTLE, a horse
 JIMMY NEEDLES, a jockey
 LOVELY, a stableboy
 THICK, a thug
 LITTLE DORA, his wife
 SYBILLINE, a moll
 ANNIE, the Bankses' neighbor

John Hawkes is a novelist of great originality and abrasive power whose intensely personal vision reveals the painfulness and absurdity of so much experience in the modern world that seems filled with violence, frustration, and lovelessness. His books, experimental in technique, belong to the "new" genre of the grotesque and the absurd, and it may be a tribute to their originality that they have not yet found a wide public.

Experiment as it was manifested in the 1920's has been tempered into the conventions of good craftsmanship, and no complaint against this healthy level of art and intelligence on which many of our younger novelists' work should be registered; the whole point of literary revolution is to create a new and consistent order. But at any time, a young novelist may appear who forces us, almost against our will, to revise our mode of apprehending experience. Such a novelist is John Hawkes, who is certainly not without a full share of art and intelligence, but who exercises these faculties to create a special mirror of life which startles us by the absolute clarity with which it reflects the distortions of dignity and decency in the life of man. Hawkes does not attempt to resolve or explain these distortions; he renders them truly. They convey that sense of unreality which is one of the realities of modern life.

Hawkes is not without his kinships and predecessors. He is in direct descent from the Gothic visions of Poe, whose imp of the perverse perched also upon the shoulder of Hawkes's contemporary, Flannery O'Connor. Among English writers, we might look back to William Beckford or, updating the comparison, to some of the earlier works of Graham Greene, particularly *Brighton Rock*. Hawkes goes beyond any of these, however, in his coolly composed delineation of mundane terror. His perception of psychological experience grows organically from the clinical documentation provided by modern psychiatry; much of his imagery derives clearly from the

painting and poetry of the Surrealists; the atmosphere in which his story takes place is a compounding of the elements of Gothic atmosphere and Wasteland terrain; and the motivation of his characters is rooted in the despair and absurdity which are so much a part of the modern temper. In Hawkes's work the traditional and the experimental, the typical and the unique, the natural and the monstrously grotesque are all fused in a vision of verifiable mid-century experience.

Developing a technique suitable for his purpose has been Hawkes's creative problem. Some of the earlier books projected complexity in such a way as only to cause difficulty for his readers. *The Lime Twig*, though still full of pitfalls for the unwary, is remarkable for the clarity of its outline and the accessibility of its substance. One device is a kind of choric newspaper column which appears at the beginning of each chapter. Written by a gaily inquisitive reporter by the name of Sidney Slyter, the column serves to provide narrative continuity, to establish a distance wherefrom to observe the events in the tortured lives of the characters, to suggest a moral norm, to offset with levity the horror felt at the center of things, and to disjoint the element of time in the manner that we are normally made aware of things—by piecing together fragments of cause and effect.

The rest of the book is developed in scenes which range in mood from the tenderly pathetic to the sardonic, from the merely confused to the phantasmagorical, from the depressing to the overwhelmingly outrageous. Many of the episodes have the weird and memorable quality of frightful dreams from which you awake to find you have been awake all the time. Others leave the reader bemused with his recognition of the inevitably absurd complexion on the face of serious situation. All the episodes are informed with sympathy, but are projected with a feeling of utter helplessness.

The central character of the first part

of the book is William Hencher, a denizen of London's East End who returns sometime after the war to the tenement flat in Violet Lane near Dreary Station where he had lovingly endured the blitz with his slatternly mother, now to find as occupants Michael Banks and his wife Margaret. Hencher takes up his abode with these people, and quickly transfers to them a love so intense as to be a kind of fetishism. Together, partly in exploitation of this love, they hatch a plot to steal a famous race horse which under a new name will win their fortune. The theft is successfully executed, though Hencher is promptly trampled to death within the first moments of illicit stabling.

His confederate Banks proceeds with indifference, but like John Donne's Death soon becomes "slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,/ And [does] with poison, war, and sickness dwell." That is to say, he is surrounded by a gang of professional crooks who stop at nothing to achieve their ends or satisfy their egos. There follows one fantastically lurid and terrifying scene after the other. Banks temporarily deserts his wife, eventually is seduced to play the stud to a disdainful but strong-willed arch-moll Sybiline, seeks solace from Annie, who is an old neighbor from Violet Lane, is subjected to cruel threatenings from the gang, and at the end, when he sees into the heart of darkness, makes a desperate bid for redemption which is answered by the deadly thunder of racing hooves upon his skull.

Meanwhile his wife Margaret suffers in her desolation of love, then pursues him to the Aldington track, but on the train is kidnaped by a traveling companion named Little Dora, who with Thick,

her husband, keeps Margaret a hostage—even after she is beaten to death.

Apocalyptic visions of clothed assassins dripping at their grisly work in a Turkish bath, of the agony of a dope addict receiving his fix in the presence of curious but cold-blooded observers, or of a silver horse being hoisted ashore by a winch while the barge is scuttled in the oily murk—such visions complete the fabric of the book. It must be emphasized that these materials are not presented for the sake of sensation, but that such sensations are effected for the sake of meaning. The novel is moving precisely because the reader does not look on the horror objectively, but is made to identify with those characters who, frustrated in their need and desire for love, suffer horror at the hands of others who are dehumanized by their indifference to love.

Hawkes succeeds admirably in sustaining the tone of his book. Its rhythm is the ebb and flow of well-paced action; its harmony is the accumulation of gradually meaningful perceptions; and its melody is the terrible cry of poor wingless man caught, snared on the lime twig which is the world.

No one else writes novels quite like Hawkes's. To find their equivalent in theme and mood, it is necessary to turn to what is now called the theater of the absurd—the works of Beckett, Ionesco, and others. There are real echoes of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*. Like some of these writers, Hawkes has also found his meaning in a focusing upon the meaningless, in a comic resignation to the terrible, and in the sympathetic response inevitably to be evoked from the beholder of suffering and stupidity.

THE LITERARY ESSAYS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

Author: Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

First published: *The Common Reader*, 1925; *The Second Common Reader*, 1932

Of Virginia Woolf's five books of non-fiction published in her lifetime two are

extended essays springing from feminist topics, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three*

Guineas, and another, *Flush*, the biography of Elizabeth Barrett's spaniel. The remaining two volumes are collections of her longer reviews and literary essays, *The Common Reader* and *The Second Common Reader*. They share the occasional acerbity and extended argument of the two long essays mentioned above and the grace and light comedy of the spaniel's life. Together they suggest that Mrs. Woolf worked comfortably in the shorter forms of literary journalism and the longer forms of fiction. The title of her two collections is taken from a common-sensical dictum by Samuel Johnson in his *Life of Gray*; it contains a delicate pun on her own critical position—she adopts the stance of a common or “garden” reader, not that of a scholar-critic—and on the chronological ordering of the pieces in each collection which makes them a critical reader by periods or a handbook to English literature.

It is a moot point whether to distinguish the two books or to conflate their contents so as to present Virginia Woolf's comments on English literature from 1390 to 1930. Since there is little change in style or critical position in the ten to fifteen years over which the essays were written, conflation seems the sensible course. The conspectus then offered is like that in *Orlando: A Biography*, that curious work which stands between Virginia Woolf's fiction and her other prose. Some of the attitudes in the essays are seen in *Orlando*: her delight in the sunny Elizabethans, the damp she feels in Victorian England. Even more there is a similar tone of graceful propriety, the search for the right touch which she shows best in her treatment of eighteenth century writers (Chesterfield's “art of pleasing” and cultivation of the Graces). This is the mark of Bloomsbury which so offended outsiders like Katherine Mansfield in the 1920's. We know that the proprieties failed under the terrible stresses of 1940 in the writer's own life. How well does that tone sound today? It reminds us of the virtues and failings of an almost forgotten art, the light and very

“English” literary essay and review. Above all, the speaking voice she employs brings to life the writer herself.

The essays can sometimes be dated internally, and some lift the veil of anonymity from those she contributed to the *London Times Literary Supplement*. Between three and seven thousand words long (generally the former), each is marked by her characteristically vivid openings and abrupt conclusions. She uses ample and effective quotation and considerable allusion to English social history, particularly to the class structure. She is particularly effective in analyzing style and in relating it to the material and perspective the writer is using, as in her analysis of Defoe, the only writer discussed in both books.

As a handbook to or a common reader's commentary on English literature, its partiality seems largely dictated by the subjects she was asked to write on and those that attracted her, perhaps two aspects of one factor. Of the twenty-one essays in *The Common Reader* and twenty-two in *The Second Common Reader*, only one is on drama, the Elizabethan drama whose extremes of passion and crowded scenes repel her because they make impossible the fine analysis of character Virginia Woolf as novelist preferred. Likewise no poets are discussed except for a passing use of Chaucer in exploring the Paston letters and an essay each on Donne and Christina Rossetti; both studies concentrate on the poet's personal life, Donne because he was an Elizabethan and the paucity of real details about his life tantalized her imagination, and Christina Rossetti because she was a woman.

In the essays, surveying English prose from late medieval letters to Hardy and Conrad, Mrs. Woolf's prevailing metaphor is one of seasonal change, decay, and growth. Less than half the essays are on novelists: Defoe, Sterne, Swift, Jane Austen, the Brontës, George Eliot, Meredith, Gissing, and others. Most are about nonfiction writers; Sidney, Evelyn, Chesterfield, Addison, De Quincey, Hazlitt. A few are on very minor writers

indeed, such as Mrs. Pilkington and the Duchess of Newcastle. What attracted Virginia Woolf most was the life recorded in diaries, letters, and memoirs—Dorothy Osbourne, Jane Carlyle—and always her approach is through the life of the writer whose work she is discussing. We often meet the writer through a woman. William Wordsworth is seen from Dorothy's viewpoint, the study of Gabriel Harvey begins with his sister Mercy. In only two essays, "Montaigne" and "The Russian Point of View," does Mrs. Woolf stray outside England. If one may judge by quantity she liked to write about eighteenth century men and nineteenth century women. Always her preference is for the lesser writer struggling with life and art and her analysis of strength and weakness is quick, just, and compassionate, as when she admires Sterne's wit and criticizes his false sentiment.

But literary journalism is seldom meant for rereading and Virginia Woolf in "The Patron and the Crocus" scoffs at the idea of making such material into a book. Her distinction, the quality that makes her essays worth collecting, lies first in her novelist's imagination which is frequently excited by the paucity of lively detail in her subject and leaps to flesh the bare bones, as in her portrait of

the first Mrs. Edgeworth. The second merit lies in the general statements about the craft of writing which are scattered through most of the essays and are the subject of the general essays sometimes anthologized from the two collections: "How It Strikes a Contemporary," "How Should One Read a Book?" and "The Niece of an Earl." The subtitle of the volumes might well be "the writer on writing," presenting in an oblique fashion the comments of Virginia Woolf, reader, on Virginia Woolf, novelist.

From her general statements it would seem that Virginia Woolf's theory of English fiction had two bases: its subject is the living individual; its material, the fine detail of living. For these reasons she admires Defoe and echoes Sterne's "Vive la bagatelle!" But what does the fine analysis and representation of life on the page finally achieve? Here is the central paradox of Mrs. Woolf's fiction and criticism, for she feels that individual emotions are more simply represented in the beginnings of literature, in Pericleian Athens and Elizabethan London. Sophisticated analysis or elemental simplicity? This paradox gives an added dimension to both collections, making them as much a commentary on Virginia Woolf, novelist, as on English prose.

LIVES

Type of work: Biography

Author: Izaak Walton (1593-1683)

First published: *The Life of John Donne*, 1640; *The Life of Sir Henry Wotton*, 1651; *The Life of Mr. Richard Hooker*, 1665; *The Life of Mr. George Herbert*, 1670; *The Life of Dr. Robert Sanderson*, 1678

Principal personages:

JOHN DONNE, famous poet and preacher, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral
SIR HENRY WOTTON, an English nobleman, diplomat, and educator

RICHARD HOOKER, noted clergyman and theologian

GEORGE HERBERT, metaphysical poet and parish priest, a member of one of the highest-ranking families of his time

ROBERT SANDERSON, Bishop of Lincoln, an Anglican clergyman during the mid-seventeenth century

Izaak Walton lived through most of the turbulent years of the seventeenth

century, but he remained at heart an Elizabethan, and it is from this perspec-

tive that he wrote his fine biographies, lives of outstanding clergymen and scholars of his day: John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson. The works appeared over a period of almost forty years, but the stable philosophy of their author gives them many points of similarity.

While Walton's subjects were unquestionably men of vastly different personalities, his own character casts an almost saintly light over all of them; emotional struggles, temptation, and personal vices play almost no part in their lives as Walton interpreted them. His accounts are not psychological studies; he is interested rather in painting portraits of virtuous men. His studies are really descendants of the saints' lives that formed the majority of early English biographies. He pays tribute in each of his works to the virtues of devoutness, humility, charitableness, and learning.

Walton's biographies have much in common in their construction, as well as in the presentation of the characters of the main figures. The author inevitably begins with a discussion of the family background of his subject, then comments on his early education. He treats the mature career of each man partly through a summary of his activities, partly through anecdotes that illustrate special personality traits or talents. Walton knew most of the men whose lives he recounts, and he occasionally reproduces his own conversations with them. He also quotes letters, poems, and even wills as evidence of characteristics of his subjects.

Walton's style is relatively personal; he often speaks in the first person, and he does not hesitate to make known his own views on the political or religious questions he happens to be discussing. In spite of this personal quality, the style itself is relatively formal and balanced, typical of the prose of his day. His vocabulary is dignified, but natural, closer to that of Dryden than to that of the more imaginative writers of Jacobean prose.

The Life of John Donne is the most famous of the five; in it Walton concentrates upon the later years of the great poet and preacher, almost ignoring the youthful works that suggest Donne's streak of wit and cynicism. He is especially interested in recounting the poet's theological development and his long struggle to consider himself worthy to be ordained to the priesthood. Walton also devotes considerable attention to Donne's marriage, the problems it created in his early career and the economic difficulties he and his family endured for years, along with the joys it brought him. A number of Donne's poems to his wife are quoted to show the depth of his feeling for her.

Walton shows in these works a conviction that the manner of a man's death reveals the essence of his character. He was himself present at Donne's deathbed, and he records with admiration Donne's devotion and concern for his parishioners—of whom Walton was one—his family, and his friends.

Sir Henry Wotton was the only layman among Walton's subjects. He grew up during the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth I, became a close friend of the Earl of Essex, and prudently chose the time of Essex's ultimately fatal conflict with the queen to travel extensively on the Continent. He made his political fortune, according to Walton, when he overheard, on his travels in Italy, a plot against Elizabeth's successor, James VI of Scotland, and went to this monarch in disguise to warn him. When James became King of England, Wotton was given a number of important diplomatic positions, notably the ambassadorship to the Venetian states. He ended his career as provost of Eton College, where his biographer pictures him at his own studies, patronizing the arts, and giving special encouragement to the most promising of his students.

Walton characterizes Wotton as an urbane, hospitable man, a "great enemy to wrangling disputes of religion," and a

lover of the arts. The two men were good friends, and it was with Wotton's encouragement that Walton began collecting material for the life of Donne.

Richard Hooker, who did much to shape the development of the Church of England with his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, is portrayed as a painfully shy, retiring man who had little but his virtuousness in common with the sophisticated Wotton. There is wry humor combined with deep sympathy in Walton's description of his marriage, at the instigation of his landlady—who convinced him that it was his duty to have a wife—to the woman's own daughter, a totally unsuitable mate who seems to have made the good clergyman's life miserable. Hooker's patient resignation in this situation and Walton's description of his friends' protective attitude toward him illuminate further his truly saintly humility and self-effacement.

Walton makes Hooker intensely human in his shyness, but he also stresses his great intellectual gifts and his contribution to his age, devoting a sizeable portion of the biography to the Calvinist-Anglican theological dispute between one Walter Travers and Hooker. He cites those points which he felt made Hooker's arguments irrefutable, revealing his own Anglican sympathies.

This biography, too, concludes with a sympathetic picture of the subject's last days. Hooker's primary concern was for his book, and he struggled against illness to bring it as near completion as possible. He, like Walton's other subjects, died at peace with God and man, resigned to his end and conscious both of his own failings and of God's power to forgive them.

Walton devotes an unusual amount of attention to the family of George Herbert, commenting at special length on his mother, Magdalen, who was one of the most remarkable women of her century, the friend and patroness of many distinguished men, among them John Donne. The first part of the account of Herbert's own life is the story of worldly and aca-

demic success; the poet rose to be the orator of Cambridge University and won high praise from James I. For Walton, however, the most important part of Herbert's life was the brief time at its end when he served as rector of the country parish of Bemerton, laying aside his intellectual emphasis and his worldly ambition to devote himself to caring for the most fundamental needs of his parishioners and to preaching as simply and clearly as possible the basic tenets of the Christian religion. Walton tells of Herbert's setting out on foot for a musical program in Salisbury and arriving covered with mud; he had stopped on the way to aid a farmer whose donkey had fallen under the weight of his load. The incident shows how far Herbert had moved from the concerns of his early days.

Here, as in several of the other works, Walton shows his own religious principles as he praises the standards Herbert followed in working with his congregation, explaining to them the significance of the various parts of the worship of the church. The biographer was aware of the failure of most of the priests of his day to meet the needs of their congregations. They preached on obscure theological points when their people needed simple advice and warm clothing. In spite of his aristocratic, wealthy background, Herbert was able to meet the wants of his parishioners with great sensitivity.

Walton concludes with a last tribute to the young poet, who died just as he was beginning to settle into his parish: "Thus he lived, and thus he died like a saint, unspotted of the world, full of almsdeeds, full of humility, and all the examples of a virtuous life."

The Life of Dr. Robert Sanderson, last of the biographies, written when Walton was reaching old age, covers the period of the Civil Wars and reveals the author's scorn for all the actions of Cromwell's government. Dr. Sanderson, made Bishop of Lincoln on the Restoration of Charles II, suffered the typical harassment of the Anglican priest who refused

to adopt the doctrines of the Puritan Parliament. He, too, conforms to Walton's notions of the ideal parish priest, and several stories of his concern for the personal problems of his congregation are discussed.

Sanderson's intellectual gifts brought him to the attention of Archbishop Laud, and he was for a time made chaplain at court, where he was one of the most articulate defenders of the Church of England. Walton relates a private conversation he had with Sanderson after the war, when the Bishop defended the Anglican liturgy, which he had modified as little as possible after he was returned to his small country parish during the Commonwealth.

Sanderson, like Hooker, was able to

move happily in either the learned society of the universities or in the company of village parishioners, and his will reveals a similar humility. Though he had, in his last years, been given worldly stature as Bishop of Lincoln, he requested that his burial be as simple and unpretentious as possible; the desire for personal aggrandizement never played a part in his career as Walton presents it.

Walton's studies may lack the psychological depth of some modern biographies, but these works are well-drawn portraits. Walton's fluent prose style, his gift for choosing telling anecdotes to reveal character, and his subtle sense of humor all contribute to the appeal his biographies have had for more than two hundred years.

LIVES OF THE POETS

Type of work: Biography and literary criticism

Author: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

First published: 1779-1781

The essays contained in Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* were composed as prefaces to a large collection of the works of English writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and they are therefore primarily critical rather than biographical works. Johnson related the known information about the lives of his subjects, but he was content to rely upon the facts gathered by earlier biographers, reserving his original thoughts for his critical commentary.

The more than fifty essays vary greatly in both length and detail. Johnson wrote extensive studies of men such as Dryden, Pope, Milton, and Swift, while he briefly summarized the achievements of minor figures whose names have vanished from all but the pages of detailed literary histories. It is a tribute to the soundness of Johnson's judgment that the writers whom he considered important are those whose works are highly regarded even now.

The collection is among Johnson's

best, most readable works. His language is characteristically stately, but his style is less formal than that of some of his earlier writing. He occasionally departs from his easy narrative flow, however, to write a striking rhetorical passage in which balanced phrases and carefully constructed comparisons make his critical judgments memorable. One of his most famous "set pieces" is his contrast of the writings of Dryden and Pope: "The style of Dryden is capricious and varied, that of Pope is cautious and uniform; Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind, Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller."

Most of the *Lives of the Poets* follows the same structural pattern. Johnson be-

gins with an account of his subject's family and his education, then summarizes the main events of his life, giving brief notes on the time and circumstances of the composition and publication of his major works. The biographies conclude with critical commentary on specific poems and a final assessment of the poet's literary talents and faults.

Johnson's moral and literary standards formed a strong foundation for all his writings, and both the biographical and critical portions of the *Lives of the Poets* reveal their author's characteristic points of view. The biographical sketch of a popular Restoration dramatist begins with this statement: "Of Thomas Otway, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating."

The character and personality of his poets were far more interesting than facts and dates to Johnson, who had begun his career as a biographer with a searching study of the motives that shaped the life of his friend Richard Savage. He often manages to convey the essential qualities of his subject in a few words. Writing of the charming, somewhat irresponsible, author of *The Beggar's Opera*, he notes: "Gay is represented as a man easily incited to hope, and deeply depressed when his hopes were disappointed. This is not the character of a hero, but it may naturally imply something more generally welcome, a soft and civil companion."

Johnson's insights into the human personality are shown especially clearly in his *Life of Pope*. He brings the brilliant, ambitious, often ailing and bad-tempered poet vividly before the reader, chiding the excessive sensitivity that made Pope viciously attack critics of his writing in satirical works such as *The Dunciad* and led him to hold grudges against his "enemies" far longer than most people thought reasonable. He also comments on one of Pope's rather amusing foibles: "In all his intercourse with mankind he had great delight in artifice, and endeavored

to attain all his purposes by indirect and unsuspected methods. He practised his arts on such small occasions that Lady Bolingbroke used to say, in a French phrase, that he plaid the politician about cabbages and turnips." Johnson points out Pope's more appealing characteristics as well, noting his loyalty to his friends and his respect and tenderness for his elderly parents, and he tries to suggest something of the state of mind brought about by Pope's physical disabilities his small stature, his weakness, and his almost constant pain.

While the *Lives of the Poets* reveals Johnson as a skillful analyst of the human personality, the book is still more interesting as a work of theoretical and practical criticism. The *Life of Cowley* contains the famous discussion of metaphysical poetry, in which Johnson defines the "Wit" which was the essence of the technique of John Donne and his followers: "Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike."

Johnson, who believed that great poetry should deal with universal thoughts in general terms, felt that the achievement of the metaphysical poets was a minor one, and he quotes many lines to illustrate the absurdities their quest for novelty often produced. He does, however, show appreciation of their intellectual efforts and grants that they occasionally succeeded: "Yet great labor directed by great ability is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage."

The *Life of Milton* shows Johnson at his worst and at his best. His dogmatic statements on "Lycidas" have been ridiculed by many later readers. His natural antipathy for allegory in general and pas-

toral allegory in particular led him to dismiss scornfully this elegy that many consider one of the finest English lyrics: "In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind."

Johnson's succinct praise of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* conforms more closely to the general view: "Every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure." His extensive remarks on *Paradise Lost* are still more illuminating. He recognizes and pays tribute to the unquestionable greatness of Milton's epic, the majesty of its poetry, its unity, and its powerful theological foundation, but he also examines closely what he feels to be a major flaw. All the characters except Adam and Eve are supernatural beings, and even these two are in a situation different from that of all other men and women: "The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged, beholds no condition in which he can, by any effort of the imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy."

This comment shows clearly Johnson's conviction that literature should be, in Aristotle's words, "an imitation of life," a reflection of the real emotions of men, a viewpoint that led him to conclude, a little reluctantly: "The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master and seek for companions."

Although Johnson's general statements are the passages from the *Lives of the Poets* most often quoted, he actually de-

voted much of his attention to commentary on specific lines. He gives, for example, a stanza by stanza discussion of Gray's ode "The Bard," criticizing the poet's excessive alliteration, his use of "the puerilities of obsolete mythology," and the numerous clichés among his images.

Quotation of brief passages is especially effective in the *Life of Dryden*, where Johnson cites many lines to illustrate both the elegance and majesty as well as the pedantry and carelessness of the poet. He finds that Dryden "delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy." Close examination of many passages leads Johnson to lament Dryden's carelessness while he admires his great talent: "Such is the unevenness of his composition that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himself contented."

A reading of *Lives of the Poets* indicates why Johnson has become increasingly famous not only as the colorful personage immortalized by Boswell, but also as one of the best prose writers and ablest critics in English literary history. Although his many prejudices occasionally brought forth declarations that modern opinion considers absurd, his personal standards generally contributed to the lasting worth of his criticism. He evaluated literature on the basis of its truth to life, and, since he understood better than most men what human beings think and feel, his judgments for the most part remain valid. He appreciated the appeal of the new and the unusual, but he reserved his highest praise for what he considered lastingly true and moving.

A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Reynolds Price (1933-)

Time: July to December, 1957

Locale: A North Carolina community

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

ROSACOCKE MUSTIAN, the heroine

EMMA MUSTIAN, her mother

MILO MUSTIAN, her elder brother

HORATIO ("BATO") MUSTIAN, her younger brother

WESLEY BEAVERS, Rosacoke's lover

MILDRED SUTTON, Rosacoke's colored friend

MR. ISAAC ALSTON, the oldest inhabitant of the community

SAMMY RANSOM, Mildred's lover, Sledge's father

SLEDGE SUTTON (OR RANSOM), Mildred's child

HORATIO MUSTIAN III, Milo's first child

FREDERICK GUPTON, another Gupton baby

This short lyrical novel tells how Wesley Beavers got Rosacoke Mustian with child and was thus reconciled to the marriage he had been dodging for years. But more than the taming of Wesley to a long and happy life, the story records the humbling of a determined and self-sufficient young woman, Rosacoke herself. The process has been going on for a number of years before the novel opens; the crisis occurs in the last few pages when Rosacoke, having decided to reject Wesley, changes her mind. The instrument of her humbling is the community in which she lives. Although it is connected with the outer world by Wesley's trips to Norfolk, Virginia, 130 miles away, by Rosacoke's daily work as a telephone operator in the nearby town of Warrenton, and by her soldier brother Rato's return for Christmas from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the locale of the novel is a traditional and self-contained North Carolina community. The long history of the clustered septs which make up the community is seen in the family graves; the speech of the novel is regional; the rituals of the community, centering on Delight Baptist Church, provide the incidents and culmination of the plot.

Although the first English edition of the novel carried a note warning the

reader to put William Faulkner out of mind, the influence of another Mississippi writer is apparent: Eudora Welty, particularly in *The Ponder Heart*. The technique of the novel is a rapid flow of internal monologue, generally from Rosacoke, broken by exchanges between the characters, all in sharply turned phrases of modified dialect, often highly prescient in meaning. The novel is in three long chapters, broken into shorter passages; each chapter involves a child: Sledge Sutton (or Ransom) who survives the death of his mother, Mildred, in the first chapter; Horatio Mustian II, who dies at birth in the second; and Frederick Gupton who plays the Christ child in the Christman pageant at Delight Church in the last. The relation of a long and happy life to a quick death is central to the novel and is indicated in the structure and style; much of the dialogue is about begetting and dying; it is also indicated in the symbols employed, such as the eternal spring, the deer, Mr. Isaac Alston's horehound candy, paregoric, and Wesley's motorcycle. In this meaningfulness of disparate objects Mr. Price also shows a similarity to Eudora Welty.

The novel opens with Rosacoke riding pillion with Wesley on his motorcycle to the funeral of Mildred Sutton, Rosacoke's

colored friend who had died in childbirth. Rosacoke's irritation with Wesley seems justified as he weaves in and out of the funeral procession and roars up to the Negro church at Mount Moriah ahead of everyone else. She had met Wesley six years before when he was sixteen and she fourteen; she has been his girl for the past three years on Saturday nights when he came back from the Naval base in Norfolk and took her dancing. Still, nothing has been decided. Wesley's remoteness (we sometimes learn what he feels, never what he is thinking) is shown in the first encounter six years earlier when he was resting up in a pecan tree and proved distant and uncommunicative to the girl below. Nevertheless he shook down the pecans as Rosacoke demanded. Had she been able to read both the situation and the symbols, Rosacoke might have guessed the only way she could capture Wesley. Although she knows he has had affairs with women in Norfolk, she properly rejects all his sex overtures.

The three chapters of the novel occur at specified intervals in the period from late July to Christmas Eve, when Wesley makes his three visits to Rosacoke, but the events between each principal action are also recorded, often by the time-tested device of letters between Rosacoke and Wesley when he is in Norfolk. The other narrative device is flashback, used when Rosacoke has moments of quiet in her room or on walks in the countryside. The first of these occurs when she arrives at Mount Moriah and waits for the funeral of Mildred Sutton. The fate of Mildred, dead in childbirth, illustrates the tension between Rosacoke and Wesley: he wants what she fears will cut short her long and happy life, as it did Mildred's, and the novel shows how she comes to accept death and live for life. At Mount Moriah one of the mourners shouts, "Sweet Jesus," which Rosacoke, sitting inside the church, thinks should bring Wesley to his senses. It does, but not the senses Rosacoke has in mind. Wesley is busy pol-

ishing the motorcycle, an extension of his own powerful physical drive, and the mourner's cry reminds him of the identical ecstatic cries of a woman in his arms at Norfolk. He roars away from the funeral to go home and ready himself for taking Rosacoke to the church picnic later that afternoon.

Rosacoke rejects Wesley's overt advances after the picnic at the lake, but she gives in to him in the second chapter, in early November, when the sight of a deer reminds her of the time she and Mildred saw one near Mr. Alston's private spring. Rosacoke's thoughts and letters show later in this chapter and the next her confusion when her brother Milo's first baby, Horatio Mustian III, dies at birth and she realizes that she is carrying Wesley's baby. She would have been safer had she given in to Wesley at the picnic. Now she has been caught in the same trap that snared Mildred. But her visits to Mildred's baby Sledge and to old Mr. Alston, the alpha and omega of the community, to some extent calm her, and when through a series of accidents she has to play, under hideously false pretenses, the Virgin Mary at the traditional Christmas pageant her mother produces at Delight Baptist Church, she reaches her crisis of acceptance. Wesley, still largely a mystery to her and the reader, is glad, he says, to do his duty and marry her at once. This is apparently all she will get from him, and having to calm eight-month-old Frederick Gupton, a hefty Infant Jesus but soaked with pargoric, allows her to fall in with her lot. Rosacoke's natural fears of childbearing—she is surrounded in the community by breeding mothers—have been allayed by the pageant, the poetry of which is probably necessary to break her will, as happens when she faces the Three Wise Men, Milo, Rato, and Wesley.

The subject of *A Long and Happy Life* is an unusual one for a first novel by a young man, and a considerable triumph of structure and style. It has the merits of brevity and depth. The one comes from

the elliptical speech of the community known from childhood, the other from a reading of universal concerns into the daily doings of a community re-created in fiction. The chief achievement of Reynolds Price is that the novel has such a consistent tone that one never thinks of it as a picture of North Carolina country folk. Similarly there is no temptation to seek an obvious, possibly Lawrencian, message in it. Rosacoke's fearfulness and Wesley's unabashed phallicism are both human characteristics, not typical states.

The central theme of "a long and happy life" is first announced in Rosacoke's testimony at Mildred's funeral—she was going to wish these greetings to Mildred on her birthday, when she heard she was dead—and is continued in every character and incident. The most impressive character is Emma Mustian, Rosacoke's mother, who has buried her wreck of a husband, brought up her family, and is on the verge of becoming a grandmother. She is the embodiment of a long, difficult and happy life.

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Type of work: Drama

Author: John Osborne (1929-)

Time: The present

Locale: A large Midland town in England

First presented: 1956

Principal characters:

JIMMY PORTER, an intense, restless working-class rebel, about twenty-five years old

ALISON PORTER, his weary middle-class wife

CLIFF LEWIS, an easy-going, relaxed friend living with Jimmy and Alison

HELENA CHARLES, Alison's actress friend who becomes Jimmy's mistress

COLONEL REDFERN, Jimmy's father-in-law, a retired army officer with a nostalgia for Edwardian England

Look Back in Anger is one of those successful works of literature that has suffered critically from its good fortune. It was an immediate hit with its original performance at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in 1956 and then went on from a long run there to further hit performances in Paris and New York, at the Berlin Festival, on road tours, and as an excellent motion picture. In addition to its theatrical success the play became a *cause célèbre* as a social event; it acquired the status of a manifesto, in effect, for those youthful critics of the Establishment in England in the post-World War II period who, after Osborne's title, came to be known as The Angry Young Men. Thus, like J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, two other phenomenal literary successes in the postwar period, Osborne's play be-

came too swept up in the form and pressure of the times to receive its deserving critical attention as a work of art. That neglect is unfortunate because *Look Back in Anger* is an exceptionally good play, though not a great one, and certainly the most successful serious English drama aesthetically as well as commercially in the post-war period.

Look Back in Anger is a vivid, powerful, and profound articulation of the moral vision of what might be called existential humanism, the prevailing view of life today. As such, it is about the making of a human being and so defines and affirms what man is. The setting throughout is a somewhat shabby one-room flat inhabited by Jimmy Porter, his wife Alison, and his friend Cliff Lewis, in an unidentified Midland town in England. This inland geographical and urban

location and the narrowly enclosed space defined by the room may be patterned after Jean Paul Sartre's *No Exit*; at any rate, they are meant to suggest the same circumstances, a human condition in which men live at close quarters with one another and, lacking escape doors or infinite vistas, struggle against and within their limitations for survival and what humanity they can attain. The time is a Sunday evening in early April. Though the world beyond the flat is never directly seen, it is clear from Jimmy's restlessness that fresh, strong new currents of life, personally and perhaps socially, are abroad. This life runs counter to all the traditional associations with Sunday, a day of rest on which Christians pay devotion to a divine power who resides in Heaven and has otherworldly rewards for those who give their loyalty to supernatural values. The voice of Heaven and God, in a manner reminiscent of A. E. Housman's "On Bredon Hill," appears in ringing church bells that sporadically punctuate Jimmy's rage to live, calling men away from life to worship the divine in fear of change and death.

Jimmy's voice and the church bells are the antagonists of the drama, and out of their incompatibility is generated the moral energy that drives the play. The conflicting passions, if the passivity Osborne assigns those who turn away from life can be called a passion, represent dramatically a choice between man and God, a choice that Osborne probably learned in large part from George Orwell, the English socialist who attacked Gandhi for his refusal to care about individual men. That choice amounts in personalities, religion, politics, and literature, incidentally, to the difference between Orwell and T. S. Eliot, the American Anglican and monarchist referred to twice in the play. Eliot, like all the unfavorably regarded people in the play, stands for imposed order, formal codes, and abstract values. Orwell and the good people in the play are willing, in Orwell's view, to risk being broken and defeated in

life, the price of committing one's self to others in love. The anger referred to in the title is, in fact, passionate indignation over the rejection of sympathy and compassion in favor of superpersonal causes or principles. It begins for Jimmy when his father, a dying veteran of the Spanish Civil War, is abandoned by everyone but Jimmy and is allowed to suffer and die alone because of ideological contempt. A man who had given his life that others might not suffer is made an outcast by the dogmatic and self-righteous.

It should perhaps be pointed out that though insistence upon these literary connections in the play might seem a bit pedantic, they establish the extent to which *Look Back in Anger* was produced by a sophisticated literary imagination and is not simply a young man's intemperate and whimsical protest against topical social matters. Osborne's anger may have its inevitable implications for social conditions in England during the postwar period, but it is also deeply rooted in English culture and the English theater, and as a work of art his play is a complex, subtle web of intellectual and moral attitudes developed over a long stretch of national history. Culturally, its origins go back to the Renaissance, to the taste for life that emerged with Renaissance humanism then and has ever since protested continuously against whatever stood in the way of the fuller satisfactions to be attained in this world. In other words, it is a contribution to the prolonged quarrel in English life over promoting man's power to seek and secure a good life on earth. Thus, it is an expression and reassessment under contemporary circumstances of the drive by English liberalism toward an authentic human culture.

More specifically, *Look Back in Anger* perpetuates the theater of Henrik Ibsen, the man most responsible for devising the modern dramatic forms for rendering the conflict between the joy of life and bourgeois repressive morality. An even more direct theatrical connection, an intermediary between Ibsen and Osborne, is

George Bernard Shaw, the Irish dramatist who championed the Life Force against Victorianism. Like these predecessors, Osborne portrays life as a class struggle in which the entrenched middle class spitefully prohibits the truly good from enjoying their place in the sun; his play, like theirs, has the air of a social protest with a socialist bias and invites political reaction. Yet it is a very literary play, as the various hidden and overt allusions in it prove, and therefore its moral aggressiveness and realistic social setting are an integral part of its point of view. His imagination occupied with a true and good life on earth, Osborne seems to write what has been called a drama of ideas, a play with a clear thesis intended to serve as propaganda for an ideological commitment. Actually, and despite this appearance, *Look Back in Anger* carries the theater of Ibsen and Shaw beyond them; this play is not burdened by Ibsen's tragic sense or Shaw's theory of historical evolution but is confined to what is existentially true in the inner as well as outer struggle between the head and the heart.

Osborne's advance beyond Ibsen and Shaw is most readily evident in the way in which he adapts Shaw's *Pygmalion* plot to his own purpose. In Shaw's play, Higgins impersonally applies his scientific knowledge as a linguist to transform a guttersnipe into a lady by changing her speech habits. What was clay and worthless becomes a living statue with human powers and dignity when Higgins endows the guttersnipe with sophisticated language and permits her intelligence, the faculty that distinguishes man from beasts, to become effectively operative. In *Look Back in Anger*, Jimmy Porter metamorphoses a bourgeois piece of marble into living flesh by hammering away at it with his relentless love and passion for life. When Jimmy tells Alison that she needs to suffer, that he wishes she would have a child and it would die, it may seem that he is not an artist-creator but a cruel, selfish destroyer. But like Higgins he is equipped with his own spark of

inner fire; he cares for life and mankind; he understands that life means trouble and responsibility. When Alison has had her child and it has died, she learns the truth Jimmy had confronted her with, and she becomes the truly alive human being Jimmy is and would have her be. She has felt herself, and so is able to feel for others; she can now love. Where she had been a self-centered woman using her sexual powers and class morality, like Anne Whitefield in Shaw's *Man and Superman*, to fulfill herself as woman, now with her maternal drive destroyed she can face Jimmy as an autonomous person and also recognize his autonomy. She is freed from service to the impersonal and unhumanized natural instincts, the "in itself" in Sartre's terminology. Alert to Jimmy's gift of life which made Jimmy contrast radically with her bourgeois acquaintances, Alison is ignited through her contact with Jimmy and is transformed into a creature capable of sympathy and compassion; she can truly care. This enlightenment does not occur for Helena, a rather different woman from Alison because she has and uses her intelligence, who despite her attraction to Jimmy's spark of divine fire preserves her allegiance to morality, preferring abstract right and wrong to people, principles to feeling.

The Shavian hero is a man of intellect and an aristocrat; he serves the Life Force with complete commitment to expanding and deepening consciousness. He prefers and can stand a cold life dedicated to creative intellect, exercised through science, art, philosophy, and classical music. Osborne's hero is a man of passion and feeling who does not serve any force or cause larger than another person. He does not shy away from life or the gutter, so adamantly rejected by Shaw, but plunges into it; dirties his hands, and insists on being embattled. His enemy is suffering and callousness, and he makes trouble because only by doing so can he make life worth while for himself and those he loves.

Though all the elements in the play are incisively relevant to its moral vision, Osborne's greatest achievement is his protagonist, a character whose manner, passions, and attitudes embody a unique, coherent style of life. Osborne has created an authentic hero who is not only the antithesis of Higgins but also of J. Alfred Profrock, T. S. Eliot's self-conscious, impotent anti-hero of the 1920's who had heard the eternal footman, death, snicker but was unable to confront the world with its spiritual folly and desiccation. If Prufrock is the archetypal embodiment of the between-the-war period's sense of life, Jimmy Porter has the same place and stature in literature for a generation later. Jimmy is the new man with the will and courage to be, one who dares to raise the overwhelming question. He demands his right to life and love,

insisting on hard-nosed contact with the world. He keeps in touch with Alison emotionally and sexually and with Cliff Lewis, with whom he is repeatedly roughhousing. Coming from the working class and living by its morality, animal-like in his physicality and passion, as Osborne emphasizes with repeated animal symbols, Jimmy approaches life with a rough masculine taste for give and take. His manner is most real and human when it is stripped to its vital essence. He lives for now and what is available, not for a future possibility here or hereafter nor for grief over a lost possession or unattainable perfection. He is a rebel robustly opposed to whatever denies or rejects existence, he is the embodiment, in short, of what it means to exist as, and to choose to be, a man.

LORD OF THE FLIES

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Golding (1911-)

Time: A period of atomic warfare

Locale: A tropical island in the Pacific

First published: 1954

Principal characters:

RALPH, an active, exuberant twelve-year-old

PIGGY, a fat, near-sighted, thinking boy

JACK MERRIDEW, a boy with a lust for authority and killing

SIMON, a self-conscious boy

ROGER, a sly, furtive boy

MAURICE, a broad, grinning boy

SAM and ERIC, twins whose identities merge as SAMNERIC

HENRY, ■ leader among the six-year-olds

PERCIVAL WEMYS MADISON, a six-year-old who forgets his name

Lord of the Flies, William Golding's first novel, captured the imagination of high school and young college readers in the late Fifties and early Sixties, replacing J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* as ■ presentation of the human condition and catapulting Golding into popular fame and fortune. Much attention has been devoted to determining the reason for the enthusiastic response to the novel, but the most obvious one has been largely ignored. *Lord of the Flies*, as its title is

meant to establish, is a story about death, about the presence of the destructive element in the blood's lust for blood and in man's consciousness and fear of death. In Golding's own phrase, it is a story about the darkness in the heart of man, much on the minds of adolescents and young adults who have only recently come into their maturer self-consciousness and through it to awareness of their autonomy and mortality. For them the encounter with the darkness is new, intense, and

frightening at the same time that it is fascinating, for they are in the throes of individuation.

Though his book wears many guises and so invites multiple interpretations, its strength derives from its being devoted, not to religious or political allegory or to attacking nineteenth century naïveté about civilization and progress through a retelling of R. N. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), but to bearing witness to a universal verity in human experience. The success of *Lord of the Flies* can be ascribed largely to the truth about man's nature Golding was able to relate so clearly and cogently in the book.

Golding's vehicle for his truth is the end of innocence experienced by Ralph, an active, high-spirited, confident twelve-year-old. At the beginning of the story Ralph exults in his freedom from grown-ups and delights in the wild luxuriance of the island on which he finds himself marooned with some enthusiastic friends; at the end he longs for the tame, is bitterly at odds with all the other boys, and weeps for the death of Piggy, his closest friend. His decline is paralleled by the destruction of the island, a tropical paradise untouched until the airplane carrying Ralph and his friends, a group of British boys ranging from six to twelve years old, crashes and burns a scar into it; later the boys proceed to demolish it until the entire island is in flames.

At first glance the island appears to be another Eden and the story a modern version of the Christian myth of the fall. But in fact it is just the reverse. In the Christian myth innocence is lost when Adam and Eve acquire knowledge of good and evil. For them, innocence is a state of unified consciousness in which exists no knowledge of sin, alienation, or death. Without self-consciousness or shame, man is not individuated; his self and will are in harmony with God's.

Ralph's pristine state, on the other hand, is individuation; he has a social identity, British manners and morality, knowledge of right and wrong. Paradise,

or the closest thing to it, is civilization, and innocence, though also ignorance for him, ignorance about the powers working toward and the consequences of dehumanization. In Ralph's loss of innocence, his separate and distinct consciousness undergoes progressive destruction resulting from the degeneration of his humanity or, what amounts to the same thing, the disintegration of reason and conscience.

This degeneration is most simply developed in the novel through the motif of names. To name is to have rational knowledge of and control over the things named. Piggy, the embodiment of reason, so equipped with a strong urge to distinguish and order, to reduce to a manageable system, becomes responsible for getting the names of all the boys on the island, and finds himself in conflict with the powers of darkness which take proper names as their enemies. When he first meets Ralph, he immediately asks him his name; Ralph, however, is not interested in knowing Piggy's. In addition to Ralph's indifference to Piggy's name, the drive toward depersonalization appears in Jack's insistence on being known by his surname, Merridew, which links him with a family rather than distinguishes him as an autonomous person. It is perhaps most significantly present in the fact that the boy with the mulberry-colored birthmark who dreams of the beast and initiates the boys' debilitating fear of darkness is nameless. As the degeneration progresses, Sam and Eric, identical twins, fuse and become Samneric. And Percival Wemys Madison, a six-year-old, eventually forgets his name, signalling thereby the boys' loss of awareness of who they are as discrete human beings. With the literal fall and death of Piggy, Ralph and the remaining boys are not only nameless but no longer have the human control over events made possible by rational awareness. They have become pawns of superpersonal, unconscious powers.

Civilization, a human creation, restricts the cosmic or primitive in man by

bounding it with moral awareness. When Rogers, for instance, feels a malicious impulse to break up a game being played by some younger boys, an invisible wall encircling them prohibits. The circle around these boys is more deeply etched around Simon. The most self-conscious of the boys, Simon is so self-aware that he finds it impossible to speak in public. And while all the other boys are gregarious, he prefers to withdraw into solitude for lonely meditations. In epileptic-type fits he talks to the Lord of the Flies or communes introspectively with the darkness within himself. His consequent self-knowledge endows him with the highest degree of conscience among the boys, for he is the most intimately familiar with the darkness in the heart of man and most temperamentally alert to the limits that must be imposed upon one's ego. It also makes him the most qualified to journey to the mountaintop and discover that the beast is not some supernatural or monstrous thing but a dead human being, and that the boys' fear, therefore, amounts to an instinctive rejection of the sin and death inherent in individuation.

Simon's knowledge is never conveyed to the other boys, however, because he is ritually sacrificed in a barbaric dance in which everybody, including Piggy and Ralph, participates when he returns from the mountaintop. His murder, the destruction of conscience, is the profoundest blow in the boys' degeneration and depersonalization. It happens because the circle drawn by civilization to restrain destructive impulses is broken by the masks the boys have learned to paint on their faces. Early in the novel Piggy and Ralph perceive Jack and his regimented group as a creature; before the story is over that creature has destroyed or engulfed every boy. It has dehumanized them by eliminating self-consciousness and thereby completely socializing them. The immolation of Simon destroys personal identity and therefore personal ity and tyranny reign. The darkness in

ety dictates be played, then irresponsibility and tyranny reign. The darkness in man's heart is liberated and justified by the masks; faceless, the person is reduced to his fear and hostility, and life becomes an unconscionable power struggle.

Ralph's education in evil, then, produces the knowledge that the darkness in the heart of man is the impersonal that threatens to engulf the personal. He discovers what Golding called the human dilemma, the hostility between reason and passion, the simultaneous, opposite motivation within man that impels him to value the self as a structure of reason and conscience yet at the same time be fascinated by freedom from the burden they impose. In *Lord of the Flies*, and throughout his fiction, Golding has sought to untie the Gordian knot by which the natural and the human are joined in man. His instrument in this novel is the fable, a narrative technique that permits him a schematic phenomenological description of human nature. Dividing man into four aspects embodied in his major characters, Jack Merridew, Ralph, Piggy, and Simon, who represent respectively passion, will, reason, and conscience, Golding traces their actions and reactions in relation to one another. What he reveals are the antagonisms of which human nature is constituted. Life is process, and so, as Golding has remarked, man must learn to live with the chaos of existence without attempting to reshape it toward his own ends or needs. Life may be complex, a proliferation of experience, and therefore resist final resolution, but intelligence is nevertheless man's distinguishing faculty. Golding made it quite clear that what he most highly values is this intelligence which makes studying man's nature possible. Man cannot alter his nature, but he can become conscious of it, and in that consciousness lies his supreme achievement and delight as a human being.

Lord of the Flies, perhaps the most lucid and controlled work of fiction in the last two or three decades, exemplifies

a powerful and disciplined intelligence thinking vigorously and incisively about life. Golding's artistry is sufficient testimony in itself that not Jack's lust but Piggy's mind, Simon's conscience, and Ralph's instinctive desire for order prevail. Golding confronts his reader with the terrors of dehumanization in order to end his innocence, but ultimately, through the style and structure of the novel, he saves him from terror by putting an end to his ignorance. The novel, as it were, names the darkness in man's heart,

and through the understanding of human nature that this naming makes possible, it reaffirms and reinforces intelligence, the power in man to make the unexpungeable darkness within him wear a human face and bear a human name. *Lord of the Flies* does not prophesy man's relentless rush to his final catastrophe; rather, it puts an end to innocence so that the powers of light inherent in man which permit individuation, personality, and responsibility can be strengthened.

LUCKY JIM

Type of work: Novel

Author: Kingsley Amis (1922-)

Time: The present

Locale: An English provincial college

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

JAMES DIXON, a young, novice history lecturer

MARGARET PEEL, a colleague who uses her neuroses adroitly in an attempt to trap him

PROFESSOR WELCH, Dixon's superior and his nemesis

MRS. WELCH

BERTRAND WELCH, their son, a painter

JULIUS GORE-URQUHART, a rich patron of the arts

CHRISTINE CALLAGHAN, his niece, the object of rivalry between Dixon and Bertrand Welch

CAROL GOLDSMITH, the woman with whom Bertrand has been having an affair, the wife of another history lecturer

JOHNS, a musician and member of the Welch circle, who delights in causing Jim trouble

Lucky Jim follows a traditional comic course: a predicament leads to endless complications, which in turn bring some, but not all, of the characters to the knowledge on which a resolution is based. Jim Dixon's predicament is dual: he has a job he does not really want but is trying hard to keep as a lecturer at a provincial English college, in medieval history, and he has become involved, without knowing quite why, with Margaret Peel, a younger but better established colleague. For the renewal of his contract Dixon depends on the mercurial opinion of Professor Welch, a seedy, absent-minded historian of independent means in whose country house Margaret is recu-

perating from an attempted suicide, the apparent result of being jilted by Catchpole, Dixon's erstwhile but since departed rival. The complications of Dixon's attempts to keep his job and of his romance follow roughly parallel courses, dramatized in a series of brilliant comic episodes.

He tries to improve his standing in several ways. He writes an absurd article on medieval ship-building techniques, agrees to give a lecture for the college's annual Festival, and accepts an invitation to a cultural weekend of madrigal singing and arty talk at Welch's home. There he meets the professor's son, Bertrand, a London artist, and Bertrand's extremely

attractive girl friend, Christine Callaghan; he dislikes both at first sight, especially Bertrand, with whom he is immediately at war. The net result of the weekend is, in spite of Jim's efforts to the contrary, greater involvement with Margaret and further damage to the status of his already tenuous job. After an overdose of culture, he sneaks out to a pub, gets drunk, makes an unsuccessful, although solicited, pass at Margaret, goes to sleep with a lighted cigarette, and burns a rug, a table, and the bedclothes in the Welches' guest room. With the surprising help of Christine, he partially conceals the fire damage; but Margaret finds them hiding the charred table and uses this act as a lever to manipulate Jim into asking her to the college's annual dress ball.

Bertrand and Christine come to the ball; so does Christine's uncle, Julius Gore-Urquhart, a rich devotee of the arts. Bertrand is hoping to work through Christine to secure a position as Gore-Urquhart's private secretary. Gore-Urquhart brings Carol Goldsmith, whose husband is also a history lecturer, to the ball. She tells Jim that she has been having an affair with Bertrand and advises Jim to drop Margaret and pursue Christine. With both Margaret and Bertrand devoting full and fawning attention to Gore-Urquhart, Jim persuades Christine to leave with him. They warm to each other, and arrange to meet again.

The next day Margaret comes to Jim's room, furious at having been left at the dance; when he announces he is through with her, she goes into hysterics. The following day he goes home with Professor Welch for dinner. There he is confronted by Mrs. Welch about the bed clothes (he confesses and apologizes) and by Bertrand about Christine. Left alone with Margaret, he finds himself, without much resistance, falling back into his old, ambiguous relation to her; she does not resist. The next afternoon he meets Christine for tea. They agree not to see each other again, for she is committed to Bertrand in the same way he is involved with Margaret.

The next night Dixon, his eye black after a fight with Bertrand over having met Christine, gives his public lecture. Aided by a number of stiff drinks beforehand, he turns the lecture, planned as an encomium to Welch's prejudices, into a condemnation of them; he parodies various people, including Welch, and falls into a drunken stupor just as he finally speaks for himself and attacks Welch's values directly.

The next day he receives word that he will be fired, meets Catchpole, who has been in Wales, and discovers that the latter had never really been involved with Margaret and that her suicide attempt was a hoax carefully planned to entrap them both. Gore-Urquhart offers him the London job Bertrand had been trying for, and Christine, having broken with Bertrand, is free. Thus, as the novel ends, Jim begins a new job in a new city with the promise of a new and better romance.

The basis of laughter, according to Henri Bergson, is the mechanization of gesture, movement, or language; it results from a substitution of the artificial for the natural so that the actions, attitudes, or speech of humans take on some aspect of the mechanical. The moral function of comedy is to scorn by laughter the mechanical, which impedes freedom and evolution, and thus to laud the natural and flexible, which allow men to survive and improve. Laughter is itself an expression of the naturalness and freedom comedy lauds.

Bergson's theory, even thus oversimplified, provides a perspective from which to view *Lucky Jim*. In it, characters are laughable, and immoral, to the extent that they resemble machines in their behavior, moral to the extent that they are natural or become natural. Laughter itself in the novel is the expression of naturalness, of feelings unfettered by social convention or individual pretension.

Welch and his son are major cases in point. Their speech, to which Amis devotes much attention, and their gestures are mechanized by cliché and affectation. This point is developed by a controlling

metaphor. The jerky movements of Welch's car are compared, both implicitly and explicitly, to his conversational habits. His passengers are in constant jeopardy because he confuses the two and often lets the course of his conversation dictate the direction of his car. Amis exploits the analogy by describing Welch's speech in automotive terms and by making his driving and his car important to the plot. Bertrand's speech is similarly automatic; it is a jibe at one of Bertrand's speech mannerisms, and not Dixon's refusal to stop seeing Christine, that leads Bertrand to hit Dixon. The same sclerosis of speech and manner is seen in varying degrees in Margaret, Johns (who continually informs on Jim), and Mrs. Welch; in each case mannerism becomes automatic, to that extent risible, and to Dixon, dangerous.

Central to the novel's theme is the irony that these automaton characters are each devoted, in a mechanical way to theories that extol the natural and oppose what is modern, urban, and industrial. These worshippers of "integrated village-type community life," home-made music, handicrafts, and other ostensible "natural" ways are, in fact, inflexible, non-adaptive, and hence neither free nor natural. In this portrayal Amis comments on a major trend of modern thought and art, the preference for the simplicities of a pre-industrial past over the present. He makes Welch and his circle precise examples of what they supposedly detest above all else—mechanization—and locates what they value—freedom and naturalness—in the enemy camp. The strategy is extremely effective; it suggests that morality is a matter not of time and place but of humans, not of theory but of

practice, and not of doctrine but of instinct.

Naturalness and freedom are problematical, but in a different manner, for Jim and Christine. Both—Jim in particular—expend considerable energy trying to live up to the Welches and what they represent. Their failure to do so, the fact that they are naturally resistant to mechanization, is the source both of a different, non-satirical humor and of their salvation. Jim wants to get away from Margaret and go to London. Instead, he tries to regulate his smoking, put on the face his superiors expect of him, talk as if he were a Cambridge don, and get along with Margaret; he tries to, but cannot, and his failures are magnificently funny. They lead to trouble; the trouble leads him to discover what he really wants, and hence away from the automatization. Special emphasis is placed on his speech, his face, and his laughter. In the Merrie Old England lecture, he begins by trying to assume the ideas and gestures he thinks, correctly, that Welch expects of him; these, however, detach themselves from him, and he ends the lecture speaking for himself.

In the novel there is a spectrum of characters, arranged according to the degree to which they have become mechanized in speech, gesture, and attitude, and, perhaps more important, the degree to which the mechanization is separable from their existences as human beings. Welch has become a thing; his mechanized gestures have totally usurped his being. Dixon is also mechanical at times and is trying hard to be more so; but his automatic gestures are merely encrustations, clearly separable from, and finally the victims of, his human self.

THE LYRIC POETRY OF BYRON

Author: George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)

First published: *Hours of Idleness*, 1807; *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1809; *Hebrew Melodies*, 1815; *The Prisoner of Chillon*, 1816

Byron's lyric poems are uneven in subject matter and execution, a quality ac-

counted for, perhaps, by their intensely personal nature and by the fact that in

some instances they look back toward the eighteenth century, in others toward the nineteenth. At their best they exhibit depth of feeling, simplicity of structure, and quality of style; at their worst they are squibs and occasional pieces which bite and sting but accomplish little.

The first volume of his lyric poems received greater attention than it deserved. Published originally as *Fugitive Pieces*, it was soon withdrawn and then reissued a year later as *Hours of Idleness*. In his preface Byron struck a pose that was to grow through the years into the character of the dark, melancholy, brooding Byronic hero. Apparently the foreword was intended to anticipate criticism, but its tone was intolerably condescending. These verses, said the author, were written by a young man who had just completed nineteen years of life; they might afford some amusement to other nineteen year olds, and probably they would be the last given to the public by the young nobleman.

The literary critic of the *Edinburgh Review* attacked the volume viciously, hoping that indeed this would be the last publication by the young nobleman, who must be thought an intruder in the groves of literature. This slashing attack elicited from Byron his own vicious *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in which he attacked not only his critic but innocent bystanders against whom he held harsh feelings, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey.

The poems in this volume are indeed slight. There are numerous pieces such as "Translation from Catullus," "Translation of the Epitaph on Virgil and Tibullus," "Imitation of Tibullus," and "Imitated from Catullus." There are also numerous poems addressed to young ladies. Most are conventional and worthless. Occasionally there are pieces which promise a more vigorous and individualized poet. Such is "When I roved a Young Highlander," which reveals at least the presence of the life, muscle, and vigor that would subsequently drive the

poet hectically through life.

The lyrics of later years are still in every way occasional, covering virtually all aspects of Byron's life. Though they all show a development over the juvenilia of the first volume, they too vary widely in quality.

On the weaker side is "To a Vain Lady," in which he pleads to a young girl not to disclose the foolish and deceitful compliments and pledges made to her by men, who as is well known are insincere in their protestations. The poet ends his plea with the statement that for the girl who reveals these amorous nothings he can have pity, but he cannot love her.

A considerably better poem is the direct and economically executed "When We Two Parted," though it is on the same subject as the poem mentioned above. The poet and his love parted tearfully but silently. The author asks how he should greet her if they should meet now after all these years; his feeling is still one of tears and silence.

An infinitely superior poem is the justly famous "Maid of Athens, Ere we Part," one of Byron's best. The poem was written to Theresa Macri, a young girl whom he met in Athens while on the Grand Tour. A brief work of only four stanzas, with a refrain in Greek ("My life, I love you"), is a clean, honest statement of love and of the continuation of this love:

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh give me back my heart!
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go,
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

By those tresses unconfin'd,
Woo'd by each Ægean wind;
By those lids whose jetty fringe
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge;
By those wild eyes like the roe,
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

By that lip I long to taste;
By that zone-encircled waist;
By all the token-flowers that tell

What words can never speak so well;
By love's alternate joy and woe,
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

Maid of Athens! I am gone:
Think of me, sweet! when alone.
Though I fly to Istambol,
Athens holds my heart and soul:
Can I cease to love thee? No!
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

Another effective lyric is "So, We'll Go No More A-Roving," which is informed by a genuine and unmaudlin nostalgia for the joys of the past strengthened by the realization that all things, even love, must end.

So, we'll go no more a-roving
So late late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a-roving
By the light of the moon.

Some of Byron's best lyrics are those addressed to his very good friend, the poet Thomas Moore. These lyrics are masculine, lively, and expressive of genuine good spirits. Perhaps the best is entitled "To Thomas Moore," in which Byron says that his boat is on the shore and his bark is on the sea, but before he sails away he will drink a double health to Tom Moore.

Without question, several of Byron's most superb lyrics are the so-called "Hebrew Melodies," which according to Byron's prefatory remarks were written at the request of a friend, Douglas Kinaird, and were to be set to traditional Hebrew tunes, as arranged by a young musician named Isaac Nathan. "She Walks in Beauty," one of the best of these and one of the best known, was written the morning after Byron met a

beautiful young cousin, Mrs. Robert John Wilmot, who was wearing a black mourning gown, the beauty of which was highlighted with spangles. The poem is a genuine, unposed, tender, and honest compliment to beauty and innocence.

I

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all tha's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

II

One shade, the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-
place.

III

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Another famous lyric from "Hebrew Melodies" is the well-known, "The Destruction of Sennacherib," with the beginning lines that compare the onset of the Assyrian to that of the wolf on the fold, with the cohorts gleaming in gold and purple, with spears shining like stars on the sea of Galilee.

In both such pieces Byron was at his best, vigorous, fluent, easy, direct, honest, and without the pose that characterized his longer works and often his short ones as well.

One of Byron's pieces that should be included in this discussion is scarcely a lyric at all except in the sheer power of the subject and of the author's execution. It is "Darkness," dated at Diodati in July, 1816. Written in blank verse, it depicts the end of the world, the final destruction of life on earth. It is a dream but more than a dream. The sun is extin-

guished; the stars wander in space. The earth is icy and swings back and forth aimlessly, cold and killing. The people are dying. The lucky ones are those who can warm themselves by volcanoes. All men are enervated by despair. Wild animals are tamed by the terror of their situations. Even the vipers are without sting, and are slain and eaten. War which had been stilled a moment broke out again in a struggle for the survival of the strongest. Finally, in this world of despair and tearing of the weak by the strong, only two persons survive, enemies. They meet beside an altar. Surviving for a moment on the ashes around that holy place, they suddenly look up and see each other, then shriek and die, slain by the hideousness of each other's visage. The world is left in blackness and desolation, with Darkness the mistress of all:

Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal:
as they dropp'd

They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

This poem, like Byron's lyrics at their best, is powerfully imagined and executed with true poetic skill and restraint.

Byron's great lyrics are not numerous. Often they are weak or mediocre because of the speed of their writing; Byron once said that he had written most of his poetry while either dressing or undressing. Often they suffer from the nature of the subject, being trivial treatments of trivial themes. But when he exercised his best skill on worthy topics the results rank high indeed among lyric poems of the early nineteenth century.

THE LYRIC POETRY OF LOWELL

Author: James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

First published: *A Year's Life and Others Poems*, 1841, *Poems*, 1844; *Poems: Second Series*, 1848; *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, 1848; *Ode: Recited at the Commemoration of the Living and Dead Soldiers of Harvard University*, 1865; *Under the Willows and Other Poems*, 1868; *The Cathedral*, 1870; *Three Memorial Poems*, 1877; *Heartsease and Rue*, 1888; *Last Poems*, 1895

It is generally acknowledged that when compared with his contemporaries Longfellow, Holmes, and Whittier, James Russell Lowell is more intellectual, wittier, and more versatile in his writings. He is remembered as a critic of distinction who carefully reread everything before he passed judgment; he was a superb writer of comic dialect poems; and he did a masterful job in the whole composition of *The Biglow Papers*.

Lowell as lyric poet, however, is not clearly superior. He was an inconsistent performer. With his brilliant and perceptive critical mind, he could spot weaknesses and virtues in the poetry of others.

Under the spell of a lyrical mood he could often write quite successful poems. But frequently he failed in his own verse, or at least the results were only mediocre. He could be guilty of penning rough lines, seemingly unable at times to create the essential beauty of the true lyric. His ear for melody was erratic; thus his lyrics often lack musical quality.

His first volume of verse, *A Year's Life*, showed the irregularity characteristic of all of Lowell's poetry. He himself recognized the inferiority of many of the poems and later referred to the collection as "the firstlings of my muse, / Poor windfalls of unripe experience." Many of

these verses, especially the longer ones, are disjointed and of doubtful imaginative ingenuity. Yet others evince qualities which foreshadow later fine lyrics. "Threnodia," for example, the touching ode on the death of a child that will be seen no more, is written in simple, well-controlled lines and offers an effective one-word refrain at the end of each stanza. There is also something of the lyric grace and freshness of Tennyson and Keats in poems such as "The Sirens," "Irené," "Rosaline," "The Moon," and "Allegra." Some of the sonnets in this collection are graceful and effective, especially those on Wordsworth, Spenser, and Keats.

Lowell's second collection, *Poems*, established his reputation. The voice in these poems seems fresher and more original. "A Legend of Brittany," a lengthy tale of ill-fated love between a humble peasant girl and an ambitious priest, is beautifully written. Void of didacticism, the poem was praised by Edgar Allan Poe, who lauded it for its aesthetic appeal. But again there are poems here which show Lowell's inconsistency. In "Rhoecus," which treats the legend of the wood nymph and the bee, Lowell mixes the aesthetic with the didactic and somewhat mars the beauty of the poem. The wood nymph moralizes after Rhoecus has injured her emissary the bee:

And he who scorns the least of Nature's
works
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from
all.

Such lines are incongruous with a beautiful passage like the following:

He started and beheld with dizzy eyes
What seemed the substance of a happy
dream
Stand there before him, spreading a
warm glow
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.
It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too
fair
To be a woman, and with eyes too meek

For any that were wont to mate with
gods.

All naked like a goddess stood she there,
And like a goddess all too beautiful
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of
shame.

An ardent believer in abolition and humanitarian reform in general, Lowell wrote many poems which deal with reform themes. The satires in the first and second series of *The Biglow Papers* are among the most famous of these verses. But the two-volume collection of 1848, along with *The Vision of Sir Launfal* in the same year, also made literature the handmaiden of reform. Three lengthy poems in blank verse, "Prometheus," "Columbus," and "A Glance Behind the Curtain" (on Oliver Cromwell), extol great men who stood for the liberation of mankind. "The Present Crisis" is a stirring abolition poem. *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, on the surface a poem about a knight's search for the Holy Grail, puts forth the theme of Christian charity. Launfal is told, as he hands a cup of water to a thirsty leper,

Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy
Grail;
Behold it is here,—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but
now.

The poem also contains another characteristic of Lowell's lyrics, a preoccupation with nature. Part of the success of the work must be ascribed to the preludes to Parts I and II, which reveal Lowell's skillful handling of season and landscape. The first prelude is devoted to a June day in New England, and the reawakening and new surge of life corresponds to Sir Launfal's setting out in the spring of life on his quest for the Grail. The second prelude describes the chill winds and snows of winter, a setting appropriate for the end of Launfal's life-long exhaustive search for his goal.

Lowell's nature poems are probably his best lyrics. He had a deep feeling for nature which had been a part of his emo-

tional response since his boyhood days in New England. His nature poetry is spontaneous (yet does not show the flaws of some of his other unrevised verse) and exhibits an almost childlike exuberance. Lowell was unconcerned with the philosophical in nature; he merely wanted to languish in its beauty and freshness. Also, his tastes for nature were limited to the pastoral or inland flora and fauna. His loves were trees, birds, and wild flowers, not the sea. His affinity with trees is expressed in such lyrics as "To a Pine-Tree," "The Birch-Tree," and "Under the Willows." In the latter he writes of his feeling of close kinship with his leafy friends:

I care not how men trace their ancestry,
To ape or Adam; let them please their
whim;
But I in June am midway to believe
A tree among my far progenitors,
Such sympathy is mine with all the
race,
Such mutual recognition vaguely sweet
There is between us.

The poems "To the Dandelion" and "The Indian Summer Reverie" are excellent examples of his pastoral tastes and his sense of the poetic beauties of nature. The former especially has been singled out as an example of masterful fusion of thought and diction. There are no weaknesses here caused by didacticism or loose structure.

Lowell composed few lyrics between 1848 and 1865, for during this time he engaged in teaching, traveling, and studying abroad, edited the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *North American Review*, and composed the second series of *The Biglow Papers*. Yet, when he returned to lyric poetry, his powers had altered but slightly. His verses now showed a certain air of maturity combined with the freshness of the nature poems, but there was the same tendency to be didactic, and the same weakness that had always been present—that of serious verse often being interrupted by light thoughts or coarse or commonplace diction.

The famous *Ode: Recited at the Harvard Commemoration*, written in 1865, was one of the most ambitious and successful of his later poems. Written to honor the Harvard men who had fought in the Civil War, this twelve-strophe ode presents Lowell at his highest poetic powers. It begins on a low key and builds up to a high point with the famous passage on Lincoln, "our Martyr-Chief":

For him her Old-World moulds aside
she threw,
And, choosing sweet clay from the
breast
Of the unexpected West,
With stuff untainted shaped a hero
new,
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God,
and true.

As in "Threnodia," Lowell here used the pseudo-Pindaric ode form which calls for lines of different length rhyming alternately and in couplets.

The other major single poem of Lowell's last years was *The Cathedral*, a long, dignified work in stately blank verse which resulted from the poet's 1855 visit to the cathedral at Chartres. Lowell felt that this poem of all others most engrossed his mental powers. The poem begins with a section on Lowell's boyhood days in Cambridge, then launches into the theme of the great faith and traditions of the past as opposed to the shallowness and imitativeness of modern religion. He laments that the old faith is irrecoverable, but he recognizes that "Each age must worship its own thought of God" and optimistically hopes that the core of the old faith will remain pertinent to New World democracy.

Besides the poems published in *Under the Willows*, among which the title poem and "In the Twilight" are outstanding, Lowell's most distinguished collection of his last years was *Three Memorial Poems*, published in 1877. Included were the "Ode" on the hundredth anniversary of the fight at Concord Bridge, "Under the Old Elm," and "An Ode" for the Fourth of July, 1876. The second of

these, concerning the hundredth anniversary of Washington's taking command of the American Army, is the best. The poem has much in common with the Harvard commemoration ode, both in its dignity and its concern with civic responsibility and nationalism. But the characterization of Washington is less vivid and sympathetic than that of Lincoln, and the poem is almost too long. It ends powerfully, however, with forty lines on Washington's home state, Virginia.

The poems of Lowell's last volume published during his lifetime, *Heartsease and Rue*, were grouped under various headings: Friendship, Sentiment, Fancy, Humor and Satire, and Epigrams. The first poem in the collection, that on Louis Agassiz, is the most memorable. Elegiac in tone, it pays tribute to Agassiz, who represented to Lowell the reconciliation of science and traditional religion. The poem also contains portraits of Holmes, Emerson, and Hawthorne. These should be compared with his earlier portrayals in *A Fable for Critics* and with Oliver Wendell Holmes's portraits in his poem "At the Saturday Club."

To sum up Lowell's accomplishments, it can be said that he often wrote well. He was not always guilty of sacrificing taste to didacticism. In such poems as "The Changeling," "She Came and Went," and "The First Snow Fall," each on the death of a child, he achieved an impression of beauty and pathos. The songlike, simple verses of "Phoebe" and his musical effects in "Hebe" show that he was not always tone deaf. Moreover, Lowell was a better versifier than he is usually given credit for being. He experi-

mented widely and very often effectively with various line lengths and meters. He used the sonnet form with ease; he composed successful odes; and he was highly skilled in his use of the four-stress line. Gay Wilson Allen has demonstrated in his *American Prosody* that Lowell achieved a kind of freedom in his verse, a more varied placing of accents and the compounding of various kinds of feet to effect fluid changes of tone and cadence, which was a distinct contribution to American prosody.

Nevertheless, there are glaring weaknesses that cannot be overlooked. Adhering to the theory of spontaneity of composition, Lowell did not revise. The nature poems could survive this omission, but other verses, especially the longer ones, could have profited from condensation and polishing. Moreover, there are bothersome eccentricities of style. His ear was at times irregular, and he would spoil otherwise exquisite passages with strained imagery, mixed metaphors, and inappropriate word coinage. This fault seems to be characteristic of Lowell's entire mental character. Brilliant as he was, his mind was so eclectic that he often lacked coherence and seemed unable to couple his thought smoothly with his diction. One critic has said that Lowell's talent was basically one of wit and humor so that, when he tried to write in serious tones, the wit and humor intervened. But this observation seems too limited. Lowell had another problem of direction and discipline. He often failed in the choice of appropriate words or images, and he frequently did not achieve the rhythm and melody he sought.

THE LYRIC POETRY OF MILTON

Author: John Milton (1609-1674)

First published: "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," 1629; "L'Allegro," 1631; "Il Penseroso," 1631; *Lycidas*, 1637; all published in *Poems*, 1645

While John Milton's reputation rests primarily upon his long works, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson*

Agonistes, his lyric poetry, written for the most part before he reached the age of forty, shows the same genius at work and

reveals the wide range of his interests and abilities. He worked with many different verse forms and traditions adapted from his study of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and Italian; many of his youthful lyrics are either translations from one of these languages or original poems in them. He did a fine English version of the famous Horatian ode "To Pyrrha," translated many of the Psalms from Hebrew into English verse, and at seventeen composed an elegy for the vice-chancellor of Cambridge and a long poem commemorating the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot. He mastered the style and spirit of classical literature, as well as its verse forms and vocabulary. The influence of the Greeks and the Romans is pervasive in both his pastoral poem, "Lycidas" and his great epic.

Milton's twenty-one sonnets, composed at intervals over a thirty-year period, illustrate remarkably well the variety of tones at his command. Five of the first six were written in Italian, and all six show his temporary immersion in the Petrarchan tradition. He proclaims himself the servant of the Muse and Love and sings the praises of his anonymous lady in terms that belie the traditional concept of Milton as the stern Puritan moralist.

More characteristic of Milton's work is the better-known "How Soon Hath Time," a poem in which he muses on the fact that he has reached his twenty-third birthday and still has little notion of where life will take him. He is, however, prepared to follow the will of God:

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure
ev'n
To that same lot, however mean or
high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the
will of Heav'n;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great task-Master's eye.

Some ten years after the composition of this poem Milton returned to the sonnet form to write a witty piece addressed to whatever "Captain or Colonel or

Knight in Arms" who might come to his house during the Civil Wars. He asks, tongue in cheek, that his home be spared, as that of the great poet Pindar was when Alexander the Great conquered his homeland. This poem is especially interesting as one of the very few pieces showing Milton in a mildly humorous frame of mind.

The same period sees Milton using the sonnet to pay graceful tribute to virtuous ladies and to a friend, the composer Henry Lawes, to praise leaders of the Parliamentary cause—Fairfax, Cromwell, and Vane—and to issue harsh-sounding tirades against critics of his treatises:

I did but prompt the age to quit their
clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise en-
vions me
Of Owls and Cuckoos, Asses, Apes
and Dogs.

The massacre of a group of Waldensians in the Piedmont occasioned one of his finest poems, which rises above his protest about a specific incident as a defense of all seekers after religious truth. Milton seldom surpassed the power of the opening lines: "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold."

Milton's mastery of the sonnet form is shown most clearly in "On his Blindness," where he grapples with the question of how, sightless, he can exercise his God-given poetic talents:

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world
and wide,
And that one Talent which is death
to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my
Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and
present
My true account, lest he returning
chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light
denied,"
I fondly ask; But patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, "God doth
not need

Either man's work or his own gifts;
who best

Bear his mild yoke, they serve him
best; his State

Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding
speed

And post o'er Land and Ocean with-
out rest:

They also serve who only stand and
wait."

The sonnets formed only a small part of Milton's poetic achievement. His early works, in addition to translations and Latin verses, included speeches for allegorical pageants presented at Cambridge and portions of entertainments for noble families. *Arcades*, composed in 1632, when Milton was twenty-four, forshadowes *Comus* in its pastoral, allegorical theme and in its mellifluous speeches and songs:

Nymphs and Shepherds dance no more
By sandy *Ladon's* Lillied banks.

On old *Lycaeus* or *Cyllene* hoar,
Trip no more in twilight ranks,

Though *Erymanth* your loss deplore,
A better soil shall give ye thanks.

Even at this stage in his poetic development Milton knew the incantatory effect of resounding classical names, which were to be used often in *Paradise Lost*.

Before he was thirty Milton wrote four poems that reveal fully that gift that was to make him one of England's two or three greatest poets. "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" belongs to the Baroque tradition in its rich imagery, its religious intensity, and its musical quality. All Milton's learning comes into play as he portrays the exodus of the pagan deities at the birth of Christ:

Peor and *Baalim*
Forsake their Temples dim,
With that twice-batter'd god of *Pales-*
tine,

And mooned *Ashtaroth*
Heav'n's Queen and Mother both,

Now sits not girt with *Tapers'* holy
shine,

The *Libyc Hammon* shrinks his horn,

In vain the *Tyrian Maids* their wounded
Thammuz mourn.

The dynamic, turbulent quality of the portion of the poem from which this stanza is taken contrasts sharply with the serene, pastoral tone of the beginning and end of the hymn, where Milton is describing the birth of the Christ Child at Bethlehem:

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light

His reign of peace upon the earth
began:

The Winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kiss't,

Whispering new joys to the mild
Ocean,

Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While Birds of Calm sit brooding on
the charmed wave.

Milton has been criticized by some who feel that these contrasting tones destroy the unity of the poem, yet by emphasizing both the peaceful and the forceful aspects of the Incarnation he has attempted to capture one of the central paradoxes of the Christian faith. He sets forth this paradox in more philosophical terms, reminiscent of Edmund Spenser's *Hymnes*, in the four introductory stanzas of the Nativity ode.

That glorious Form, that Light un-
sufferable,

And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high
Council-Table,

To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,

He laid aside; and here with us to be,
Forsook the Courts of everlasting
Day,

And chose with us a darksome House
of mortal Clay.

The interests that were to culminate in *Paradise Lost* are already evident in this poem, composed nearly thirty-five years before the great epic.

"L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are companion pieces setting forth the pleasures of the cheerful man and the pensive one. Writing in the same tetrameter line in both poems, Milton has carefully

worked out parallel, but contrasting, sections. The man of mirth seeks the company of gay rural people in the daytime and frequents the city at night, attending the theater "if Jonson's learned Sock be on, or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child, warble his native Wood-notes wild." The melancholy man prefers solitude; his favorite time of day is evening, when he can wander alone in the woods, contemplating the stars. He spends his days in the cloister with his books and looks forward to ending his life in a hermitage. The mirthful man listens for the lark, the herald of morning; the pensive one awaits the song of the nightingale. Both men love music, but the latter is moved by the organ's peals and the anthems of a choir, while the former seeks a more romantic melody:

And ever against eating Cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian Airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running;
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony. . . .

Even the rhythms of the two poems echo the contrast the poet is making. The address to mirth that begins "L'Allegro" moves rapidly, joyfully:

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods and Becks, and Wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek. . . .

Summoning melancholy, the poet shapes his words to a slower, statelier pace:

Come pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train. . . .

Seldom, if ever, has the essence of a mood been so clearly conveyed as it is in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," through

an almost perfect fusion of idea, image, and sound. Milton understood the appeals of both the active and the contemplative life, and he makes both paths equally attractive to his reader.

It is in "Lycidas," the pastoral elegy written on the death of a young Cambridge student, Edward King, who was a promising poet, that Milton's assimilation of the classical tradition is most evident. The detachment and the artificiality of the Greek and Latin pastoral made the form appropriate for lamenting an acquaintance; Milton did not know King well enough to feel deep personal grief. More important, the pastoral elegy as it was developed by Theocritus, Vergil, and their imitators traditionally encompassed discussions of literature and society. "Lycidas" has as much to say about Milton's poetic ambitions and his distress at the state of religion in his time as it does about the death of King.

The poem includes many conventions of the pastoral elegy: the lament of nature for the dead poet; the appeal to the sea nymphs who might have saved him; the reminiscences of his brother shepherd, who watched his flock and played his pipes with him; and the final turn from grief to joy with the realization that Lycidas lives again, immortal, as the genius, the guardian spirit, of the shore. The image of the poet as shepherd was so often used in Renaissance lyrics that it became a popular cliché; Milton adopts, too, the traditional Christian concept of Christ as the good shepherd to integrate his criticism of the clergy into the poem.

The lament for Lycidas is framed by two brief sections focusing attention on the narrator, the shepherd poet who is Milton himself. He first addresses the prematurely withered laurels and myrtles, plants associated with poetic fame, and declares his intention to sing of his dead friend. After the exalted conclusion of the lament, when Lycidas' immortality is proclaimed, a second voice enters to describe the departure of the shepherd-singer:

At last he rose, and twitch't his Mantle
blue:
Tomorrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures
new.

These lines suggest that perhaps even then Milton was contemplating greater things as a poet; the conventional classical pattern was to serve one's apprenticeship by writing pastoral poetry in preparation for the masterwork, the epic.

The main section of "Lycidas" falls into three parts. The first includes the mourning of the singer and his meditations on mortality. If Lycidas can die so young, why seek fame through writing? Apollo answers his question; it is not human, but divine, to acclaim that is to be desired:

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal
soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumor
lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those
pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy
meed."

The second part introduces a procession of mourners: a herald of the sea who protests his innocence in the shepherd's drowning; Camus, the god of the river that runs through Cambridge, lamenting his loss; and finally St. Peter, who voices Milton's disgust with the priests of his time:

He shook his Mitred locks, and stern
bespake:
"How well could I have spar'd for thee,
young swain,

Enough of such as for their bellies'
sake,
Creep and intrude and climb into the
fold?
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearers'
feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden
guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves
know how to hold
A Sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught
else the least
That to the faithful Herdman's art be-
longs!"

A calmer tone prevails in the third part, in which Milton calls on the valleys round about to bloom with flowers for the shepherd's hearse. His quiet grief is expressed in the famous lines:

Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt
with ruth;
And, O ye Dolphins, waft the hapless
youth.

At this point there is an abrupt change as the poet proclaims Lycidas' immortality, and the elegy ends on a joyful note.

A study of Milton's shorter poems brings a new awareness of the poet's genius. He was the master of many voices—the lyric, the philosophic, and the satiric—even in his early works, which show little evidence of an inexperienced pen at work. Few writers have had so fine a mastery of the English language, and perhaps no other Englishman has surpassed him as a writer of Latin, Italian, and Greek verse. He would stand as one of his country's most remarkable literary men if his fame rested solely on the works discussed here.

THE LYRIC POETRY OF SPENSER

Author: Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599)

First published: *Amoretti*, 1595; *Epithalamion*, 1595; *Fowre Hymnes*, 1596; *Prothalamion*, 1596

The best of Edmund Spenser's lyric poetry, his sonnets, wedding songs, and his hymns, were all products of the years

during which he was preparing his great epic romance, *The Faerie Queene*, for publication, and they reveal him at the

height of his powers. He had in his earlier years mastered many verse forms and experimented with a variety of subjects in his collection of pastoral poems, *The Shepherdes Calendar*, in the melancholy laments on mutability adapted from French and Italian sources in *The Ruines of Time*, the *Visions of Bellay*, and the *Visions of Petrarch*, in the charming mock-epics, *Virgil's Gnat* and *Muiopotmos: or the Fate of the Butterfly*, and in the clever satire, *Mother Hubbard's Tale*. The later works, the *Amoretti*, the *Epithalamion*, the *Prothalamion*, and the *Foure Hymnes*, reveal throughout a beauty and control of language that is only intermittent in much of the poet's earlier writing. They are, like *The Faerie Queene*, peculiarly the product of the Renaissance in their adherence to the Petrarchan conventions of courtly love and in their fusion of Christian theology and Platonic philosophy.

The sonnet sequence, the *Amoretti*, and the *Epithalamion*, were Spenser's wedding gifts to his wife, Elizabeth Boyle. These works are remarkable for the skill with which the poet has managed to convey his personal feelings and at the same time to universalize his experiences. He is all bridegrooms addressing all brides in the marriage hymn, even while he alludes to the Irish landscape around his home, and he makes the sonnets a record of the typical scorned courtly lover's entreating his proud lady for mercy, as well as a description of the course of his own courtship of his future wife.

The narrative framework of the *Amoretti* is very sketchy; the poet meets with rejection for many months, and the early sonnets are often protests against the pride and cruelty of the lady. At last she relents and agrees to marry him, and he records his happiness in the later poems. The happy ending of the sequence is almost unique in Elizabethan poetry, for the typical Petrarchan lover was doomed to perpetual rejection.

Spenser characterizes his beloved as a

proud, virtuous beauty. Even as he protests at her unkindness, he admires the moral strength that makes her all the more beautiful in his eyes. Many of the sonnets reflect the conventional Renaissance picture of the lady as a victorious warrior who has subdued her abject suitor and made him her vassal. The images of master and servant and of warrior and captive recur in a number of the poems. Sonnet XX begins with a characteristic description of the Petrarchan lover:

In vain I seek and sue to her for grace,
And do mine humbled heart before her
pour:
The whiles her foot she in my neck
doth place,
And tread my life down in the lowly
floor.

Spenser's lady is by no means always seen as cruel tyrant, however; more often he associates her with the Platonic concept of ideal beauty. The Renaissance Platonist viewed the love of a man for a woman as the first step toward ultimate union with the divine. The beauty of an individual woman led her lover to contemplation of the idea of beauty, and he could finally be lifted out of himself, freed from his personal lusts, to contemplate God. Seen in this light, a love affair has many elements of a religious experience, and it is as such that Spenser often describes his relationship with his future wife:

The sovereign beauty which I do ad-
mire,
Witness the world how worthy to be
praised;
The light whereof hath kindled heav-
enly fire
In my frail spirit, by her from baseness
raised:
That being now with her huge bright-
ness dazed,
Base thing I can no more endure to
view;
But looking still on her, I stand amazed
At wondrous sight of so celestial hue.

The lady becomes a channel for the light of God, which refines the soul of the

lover as heat does base metal. Beauty is associated with absolute truth and good; Spenser praises his beloved not for her fair appearance, which time will blast, but for her spiritual graces, which are permanent:

But the true fair, that is the gentle
wit
And virtuous mind, is much more
praised of me.
For all the rest, how ever fair it be,
Shall turn to naught and lose that glorious hue:
But only that is permanent and free
From frail corruption, that doth flesh
ensue.
That is true beauty: that doth argue
you
To be divine, and born of heavenly
seed.

While the majority of the sonnets are either the protestations of the scorned Petrarchan lover or the ecstasies of the Platonist, a few seem to be simple statements of the poet's sorrow or of the quiet happiness he experienced when he had once been accepted. Particularly fine is the seventieth sonnet, which moves suddenly into the world of nature with the fresh and spontaneous quality of the medieval lyrics:

Fresh Spring, the herald of love's
mighty king,
In whose coat-armour richly are displayed
All sorts of flowers the which on earth
do spring,
In goodly colours gloriously arrayed,
Go to my love, where she is careless
laid,
Yet in her winter's bower, not well
awake;
Tell her the joyous time will not be
stayed,
Unless she do him by the forelock take.

The *Amoretti* have inevitably been compared with the sonnet sequences of Shakespeare and Sidney, but most critics find them less satisfactory than either of the others. Spenser does not have the metaphysical wit and intensity of Shake-

speare or the natural ease of Sidney, and the unfamiliar conventions of Renaissance Platonism and courtly love place barriers between him and the modern reader. Nevertheless, the dignity and beauty of his language, the fusion of personal, traditional, and the quiet assurance of his love in the later poems, all combine to make the *Amoretti* satisfying poems, if not the greatest in their genre.

No such criticism has been directed at the *Epithalamion*, which is certainly the best of Spenser's shorter poems and perhaps the greatest of all English odes. It is a hymn of joy addressed to his bride on their wedding day, a stately poem whose tone becomes progressively more exalted as the poet moves through the events of the day from morning toward evening and the consummation of his happiness. The vocabulary and the imagery of the poem, as well as the genre itself, are classical. Spenser calls upon the Muses, the Hours, Hymen, the god of marriage, and Juno to bless his bride, and he models his description of the wedding procession, parts of the ceremony, and the feast on the epithalamia of Catullus and other classical poets. Many of the best parts of the poem, however, are reflections of Spenser's closeness to the English tradition and to the landscape around him. He calls upon the Irish river nymphs to attend his bride:

Ye nymphs of Mulla, which with careful
heed
The silver scaly trouts do tend full well,
The greedy pikes which use therein to
feed,
(Those trouts and pikes all others do excel)
And ye likewise which keep the rushy
lake,
Where none do fishes take,
Bind up the locks which hang scattered
light,
And in his waters, which your mirror
make,
Behold your faces as the crystal bright,
That when you come whereas my love
doth lie,
No blemish she may spy.

Spenser's ability to bring clear visual images before his reader contributes greatly to the beauty of the poem. He describes his wife as she stands before the altar of the temple, which seems at once Christian and pagan:

Behold, whiles she before the altar
stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her
speaks,
And blesseth her with his two happy
hands,
How the red roses flush up in her
cheeks,
And the pure snow with goodly vermeil
stain,
Like crimson dyed in grain.

The greatness of the *Epithalamion* rests upon the near-perfect fusion of classical and native themes and images, upon the vivid evocation of the sights and sounds of the wedding, and especially upon the depth of feeling that sustains the exalted tone of the poem and makes it a universal, as well as a personal celebration of love and marriage. Spenser used many of the same technical devices, classical imagery, a refrain, and mythological characters, in the *Prothalamion*, a poem written for the marriages of the Lady Elizabeth Somerset and her sister Katherine, daughters of the Earl of Worcester, but he does not achieve the heights of the *Epithalamion* in the later work.

The *Prothalamion* is frankly a "public" poem, written to win the favor of the brides' father rather than out of any intense feeling, and it makes its effect primarily through its rich, copious description. Spenser begins on a rather discordant note, describing how, in a fit of depression brought on by his long, hopeless quest for favor at court, he walked along the shores of the Thames. There he saw first a group of nymphs gathering flowers, then two beautiful swans, swimming toward Somerset House. As the nymphs threw flowers in the path of the birds, one of their number sang a wedding hymn:

Let endless peace your steadfast hearts
accord,
And blessed plenty wait upon your
board;
And let your bed with pleasures chaste
abound,
That fruitful issue may to you afford,
Which may your foes confound,
And make your joys redound,
Upon your bridal day, which is not
long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my
song.

Somerset and the bridegrooms come out to meet the swans at the end of their journey; Spenser describes their meeting in typical classical images:

From those high towers this noble lord
issuing,
Like radiant Hesper when his golden
hair
In th'ocean billows he hath bathed fair,
Descended to the river's open viewing,
With a great train ensuing.

A number of the philosophical themes and images from the *Amoretti* appear again in the *Fowre Hymnes*. Spenser states in his preface to these poems that he wrote the first two, the *Hymnes in Honour of Love and Beauty*, in his youth; the latter two, addressed to Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty, constitute a kind of recantation of the earlier poems. There is, however, much less to reject in the original *Hymnes* than his statement would suggest, for they deal with love and beauty primarily in the Platonic terms discussed in connection with the sonnets. Spenser's Platonism is almost always colored by his Christianity; the Eros of the first hymn is not merely the mischievous boy Cupid but the creative force that binds together the discordant elements making up the universe, and the poet addresses him in terms that have distinctly Christian overtones: "My guide, my God, my victor, and my king." In this poem, as in the *Amoretti*, love is a purifying force:

Such is the power of that sweet passion,
That it all sordid baseness doth expel,

And the refined mind doth newly fashion
 Unto a fairer form, which now doth dwell
 In his high thought, that would it self excel;
 Which he beholding still with constant sight,
 Admires the mirror of so heavenly light.

Beauty, glorified in the second Hymne, is described as a Platonic idea, created by God, with the power to kindle an essentially spiritual affection:

But that fair lamp, from whose celestial ray
 That light proceeds which kindleth lovers' fire,
 Shall never be extinguished nor decay;
 But when the vital spirits do expire,
 Unto her native planet shall retire;
 For it is heavenly born, and cannot die,
 Being a parcel of the purest sky.

Spenser makes beauty almost synonymous with good or truth, for he sees a fair body as the "fleshly bower" of a beautiful soul and believes that "all that fair is, is by nature good."

While the dominant tone of the first two hymns is Platonic, there are passages in both that treat love and beauty in Petrarchan terms, and the two elements are not always successfully united. The same god who is "lord of truth and loyalty," lifting man out of himself toward Heaven, is also "tyrant Love" who laughs when he sees men "languishing like thralls forlorn," captives of the fair servants of Venus who shoot "Armies of loves" from their eyes to enslave men.

The "Hymne of Heavenly Love," the poem which comes nearest orthodox Christianity, relates the creation, the fall of man, and his redemption through the Incarnation of Christ, the "great Lord of Love." Even Spenser's Christianity is colored by his Platonism; it is the contemplative ideal, rather than the active life of service, that he praises in Platonic terms in his conclusion:

Thenceforth all world's desire will in
 thee die,

And all earth's glory, on which men do gaze,
 Seem dirt and dross in thy pure sighted eye,
 Compared to that celestial beauty's blaze,
 Whose glorious beams all fleshly sense doth daze
 With admiration of their passing light,
 Blinding the eyes and luming the sight.

Then shall thy ravished soul inspired be
 With heavenly thoughts, far above human skill,
 And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see
 Th' idea of his pure glory present still
 Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
 With sweet enagement of celestial love,
 Kindled through sight of those fair things above.

The difficult fourth hymn, perhaps the most Platonic of all, describes man's progress from appreciation of the beauty of the earth to contemplation of "the glory of that Majesty Divine" that completely enraptures him. The poet embodies Heavenly Beauty in Sapience, wisdom, whom he makes a kind of fourth person of the Trinity, the "sovereign darling of the Deity." She is "that Sovereign Light, from whose pure beams all perfect Beauty springs," who inspires man's love of God and lifts him above this "vile world."

Spenser's lyrics are not written in a style fashionable among present-day critics, who look for brevity, powerful personal emotion, and harsh dramatic rhythms of speech. However, his poems will continue to please those readers who appreciate the characteristic Renaissance poetic virtues of rich imagery, lavish description appealing to the eye and the ear, and lofty, graceful language. Few, if any, other English poets have expressed so clearly and so artistically the nature of Christian Platonism in the late sixteenth century, and an understanding of the religious and philosophical elements so well

set forth in the *Amoretti* and the *Fowre Hymnes* can illuminate many parts of *The Faerie Queene*. Most readers will,

however, continue to return to Spenser's lyric poetry not for its philosophy, but for its lasting beauty.

MAIN CURRENTS IN AMERICAN THOUGHT

Type of work: History of ideas

Author: Vernon Louis Parrington (1871-1929)

First published: 1927-1930

Vernon Louis Parrington's work is generally termed "monumental" for two reasons. First, the detailed tables of contents show an awesome knowledge of literary and political history and the ability to place the major, minor, and insignificant American writers from 1620 to 1900; second, the guide to this imposition of order is a passionate belief in Jeffersonian democracy as the essentially American philosophy. Parrington's work had the revolutionary effect of giving American writers a social dimension never seen in histories of English literature or English thought, a dimension making meaningful and in turn greatly accelerating the study of American literature in schools and colleges, as the work of Frederick Jackson Turner stimulated the study of American history in terms of America.

For Parrington, two "currents" affected the American mind, Romanticism and Realism, with the division between the two at 1860. His first problem, however, was to establish the growth and actual existence of that mind itself; this task is accomplished in the historical survey of the first volume, *The Colonial Mind*, where colonial conditions formed a certain way of thought which then changed during the Revolutionary War into the American mind. The national temper is then studied in the two succeeding volumes dealing with Romanticism and Realism.

The three books of the first volume are entitled "Liberalism and Puritanism," "The Colonial Mind," and "Liberalism and the Constitution." The first covers the first century of American history, 1620-1720, in which conflict appears be-

tween Carolinian liberalism and Puritanism; the new environment comes into play and strengthens the latter so that the first part of this book records the triumph of theocratic oligarchy in Massachusetts up to 1660. The ground for this triumph is prepared for in the growing rigidity of Puritan thought and practice as a result of transplanting European ideas, but Parrington's sympathy is with the Independents, especially Roger Williams, who excites some of his loftiest prose. That triumph led to the "twilight" of the oligarchy after 1660; Increase Mather is attacked as intolerant and dictatorial, and Cotton Mather is analyzed pitilessly; the fall of Massachusetts is symbolized in the witch trials of Salem and caused by increasing rigidity of thought in the face of growing economic pressure for changes in the social system.

The second book of the first volume is also divided into two parts: the "making" of the "colonial mind" and the "awakening" of the "American mind," with the division at 1763. The colonial mind, having lost the Puritan systemization, is at first at the greater mercy of the environment: the eighteenth century influx of Scotch-Irish and Germans—the latter settling mostly in Pennsylvania—develops a consciousness of the hinterland which veers between adulation, in Crèvecoeur, and contempt, in Madame Knight, with William Byrd in between. Jonathan Edwards is pushed offstage along with the Great Awakening and the spotlight given to Benjamin Franklin, the heir to French Physiocratic views and the first American with a truly American mind. The second part is largely political,

outlining the mind of the American Tory, Thomas Hutchinson; the American Whig, John Dickinson; and the American Democrat, Samuel Adams. At the conclusion of this part American literature makes its first appearance as "literary echoes" in the form of Whig and Tory satires.

Literature is better represented in the third part of Book III, which covers the last seventeen years of the eighteenth century and introduces at its close the first novelist, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and the poets Philip Freneau and Joel Barlow, whom Parrington approves of for their republicanism. He does not think much of the Hartford Wits, whom he labels with his worst stigma, "arch conservatives." But the literature in these stirring years takes second place to politics, in which the clash is now between the transplanted English ideas of *laissez faire* and the agrarianism which for Parrington is the soundest basis for his cherished liberalism. Agrarianism was defeated in the years between 1783 and 1787, according to Parrington, in spite of Thomas Jefferson, the towering figure who dominates all of Parrington's work and brings the first two centuries of American thought to a fitting close. Jefferson was able to re-think transplanted ideas into an American context and thus establish the American mind as an independent and vital entity.

In the next two volumes Parrington sets out to trace the fortunes of "currents" of this mind through the nineteenth century up to 1920, with an even break between them at 1860.

New England comes into its own again in the second volume, *The Romantic Revolution in America*. This pre-eminence is not surprising, for the period covered is the first half of the nineteenth century, the decades of the Transcendentalists. Three "minds" are established as well, those of the Middle East, the South, and New England. The first is treated comparatively briefly under three headings in Book II of this volume: writers of Phila-

delphia, such as Charles Brockden Brown, those of New York, the new literary capital, and those who came to New York from New England, William Cullen Bryant, Horace Greeley, and Herman Melville; the treatment of the last is simply headed "Pessimist" and shows at its worst Parrington's inability to analyze literature which does not contain his ideas. Much more sympathetic is the study of James Fenimore Cooper, largely because of the social criticism Parrington discerned in his work. In the New Yorker school Parrington subdivided Irving and Paulding as Knickerbocker Romantics and preferred the latter on equally bad grounds: Irving is a "flaneur."

The strength of Volume II is its three parts devoted to "The Mind of The South," with which the volume opens. Howard Mumford Jones has testified, in *The Theory of American Literature*, to the astonishment of young scholars at Parrington's recovery of writers who had gradually been forgotten under the New England ascendancy of the post-Civil War years. The best example is the fourth chapter of Part II, devoted chiefly to the achievements of Charleston as a literary center, best represented by William Gilmore Simms. Perhaps equally surprising is the title of Part I: "The Virginia Renaissance." Although this section begins with the tradition of agrarianism, it passes on to literary matters in the eleven pages devoted to John Pendleton Kennedy and concluded by three on Edgar Allen Poe, literary radicalism (and perhaps insensitivity) could scarcely go further. Parrington is at his best, however, in his scrupulously fair analysis of the Southern defense of slavery, but it must have been with some relief that he concluded the first book with a summary of the positions of Jackson and Lincoln as symbols of the West and with the first Western literature, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* and Davy Crockett. Naturally he prefers the realism of the former to the myth of the latter—"a wastrel."

The third book of the second volume is divided into four parts on the New England mind; the first two are still valuable as summaries of the political and social thought of New England, dealing with figures like Webster, Channing, and Garrison, and including sections on Brook Farm, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Harriet Beecher Stowe which are largely economic or environmental studies. Literature occupies the third and fourth parts and is somewhat loosely organized as the Transcendental and "other" aspects of the New England mind, the latter including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell, with a very brief mention of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. All the "other" writers suffer the stigma of being "genteel," which is interpreted as "unrealistic." This idea allows Parrington to demonstrate the necessary decline in the Romantic movement with which the whole volume is supposed to be concerned, but which is largely evidenced in Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Discussion of the decline closes the volume and prepares the way for the Realism to be celebrated in the third.

The third Volume, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America*, was published after Parrington's death; of the

three books the first, "Changing America," is almost complete and about half the second, "The Old and the New: Storm Clouds." Book I takes the story of American thought through two decades after the Civil War, but the press of economic and political analysis is so great that the writers tend to be sandwiched into the second chapter of Part I—Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, and the local colorists—and the concluding chapter of Part II—Henry James and William Dean Howells. The social and mental background is still Parrington's forte and for that reason we are glad to have all the information in Book I and the first half of Book II, but it is to be regretted that Parrington was unable to complement his accompanying studies of Hamlin Garland and Edward Bellamy with those of other naturalists such as Frank Norris and Stephen Crane, and frontier writers. All that remains of the third volume are the addenda of scattered notes on writers, the plan, and an unfinished introduction. Perhaps death preserved Parrington from the increasing difficulties of applying his method and purpose to a much greater volume of literature, but one would like to have seen the attempt to fit writers like Edith Wharton and F. Scott Fitzgerald into his grand design.

MALCOLM

Type of work: Novel

Author: James Purdy (1923-)

Time: The present

Locale: A city in the United States

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

MALCOLM, a fifteen-year-old boy

MR. COX, an astrologer

ESTEL BLANC, an undertaker

KERMIT RAPHAELSON, a small man, a painter

LAUREEN RAPHAELSON, his wife

GIRARD GIRARD, a magnate

MADAME GIRARD, his wife

JEROME BRACE, an ex-convict, a writer

ELOISE BRACE, his wife, an artist

MELBA, a popular singer, Malcolm's wife

Gus, a "contemporary," Melba's first husband

The innocent can only grow up or die, and so when Malcolm, young, exquisite, and newly-married, succumbs to alcoholism and sexual hyperaesthesia, the fact of his death has a familiar romantic ring. But Purdy casts doubt on the coroner's report: a dog bite may, less romantically, have killed the boy or on the other hand he may never have died at all. For this is a book in which the author claims not to know the story.

Abandoning the novel's old-time reliance on coherent detail, carefully structured to convince us that characters and setting are real and the course of events inevitable, Purdy offers no overall context for his novel; he gives it to us like a circus without a tent. Appropriately, the story takes place in an unreal city, which is never described as a whole; we simply arrive at various, dissimilar locations within it. The characters, collected from the city's chateaux and jazz joints, are so different in "period" that one would not expect to find them in the same book. Their behavior is bizarre and idiosyncratic; the descriptive detail of their persons is conflicting and arbitrary; and their dialogue proceeds by *non sequitur*. The range of conversational style includes highflown rhetoric, deliberately awkward formality, stylized colloquialism, malapropism, and incisive comment. Resounding themes are initiated and then broken off, so that the book seems nervous, impatient, its penetrations accidental. It is put together like a collage, and one is constantly startled by the fragments. Their arrangement is unconventional, often witty and often fresh, but the book's novelty is insistent in that the new becomes routine because it is not developed.

We discover Malcolm sitting on a bench, waiting for his father, who has disappeared or died. A beautiful, blank-minded young boy—the issue perhaps of some immaculate begetting—he seems never to have had a mother at all. The boy knows no one in town, and his money, which was considerable, is running out. Expectant, susceptible, he

merely sits and waits, and his grace is in his waiting quality, in his reverence for his father, his vague loyalty to their elegant, aimless way of life and his reluctance to commit himself to anything else. In this attitude, he is, figuratively, on the bench.

The man who helps him off is Mr. Cox, an astrologer by profession, a corrupter by reputation, and, ominously enough, at least in his own mind, "civilization" itself. He offers Malcolm a series of addresses and in this seemingly civilized way introduces him to an exotic undertaker; an artistic midget called Kermit Raphaelson and his wife Laureen; a powerful magnate named Girard Girard and his forbidding wife Madame Girard; and finally Eloise Brace, an artist whose pictures resemble herself, and her husband Jerome, an ex-convict who writes books and thinks that Malcolm is the essence of life. These people all like Malcolm, to varying degrees, and so with each introduction he becomes more involved in the madness of Purdy's adult world, closer to what is customary there.

As Kermit explains early in the book, both he and Malcolm are in the difficult position of being "not usual." The midget's life has been so brief and sheltered, in fact, that he can almost believe that he is not a midget at all, but only a very small, not quite fully grown man. He cannot yet reconcile himself to the cruelty of being objectively defined, even though he does not hesitate to define Mr. Cox, the astrologer, as a "pederast," a word which Malcolm acquires and uses but does not understand. Kermit's despair comes when he resigns himself to the inevitability of his stunted form and begins to impose upon himself a stunted life, first by refusing an invitation that he longs to accept, an invitation to spend the summer in the country with the Girards and with Malcolm. Dazzled by the trio's splendor and held back by his own humility and resentment, the young midget can only kneel in anguish behind the door he has closed in their faces.

Malcolm, however, is too receptive to set limits on his life and too attractive to need to do so. Before the book ends, he is passing as a "contemporary," affecting the "usual" style of speech, and even marrying a popular singer, after the prenuptial rites of being tattooed and visiting a brothel. He has gone far from his bench by the time he catches sight of his long-lost father across a crowded night-club room. After following the man to the lavatory, he attempts to embrace him; but his "father," a stranger, knocks him to the floor and calls him a pederast. Thus, the usual squalor of a men's room confrontation superimposes its meaning on our hero's pure sentiments. Having been called the same derogatory name as Mr. Cox, he must by now be civilized. But we cannot be sure, because Malcolm's adult vocabulary is still shaky: he believes that the derogatory word in question is simply a synonym for "astrologer."

Malcolm is a book of innuendo and anticlimax, full of portended meanings, which, as an afterthought or a joke, are later denied. The obscurity of the sexual events is a case in point. The men that Malcolm meets are likely to suggest, somewhat ambiguously, that he lie down, talk privately, or come away with them, and in an early scene Kermit disregards protocol by introducing Malcolm to his morning servant, rather casually permitting him to serve the ginger beer without any clothes on. After thus arousing interest in his character, Purdy never follows up the introduction. There are other fleeting glimpses of literally or emotionally naked people in this book, but, however straightforward their nakedness may be, the glimpses we are allowed of them are teasing and pointless. Like Kermit's renunciation scene, the few passages that approach genuine emotion are undercut, contradicted, or diluted by what comes afterward. Even the basic axiom of the

book, that Malcolm is valued to everyone, is brushed aside at the end by the fact that he is forgotten and so many things happen after he, like his father before him, disappears or dies.

To some extent Purdy's mannered capriciousness reminds us of certain children's books, whose characters are fixed sketches that never develop, although their feelings, size, and shape can change at the snap of someone's fingers; where exclamation points, like hyperboles and *non sequiturs*, abound; where the protagonist is known by the other characters before he appears and is rebuffed or adored by them before he acts; where the world is strange to him and he has trouble with its language. However affable or well intentioned he may be, he needs a great deal of magic to keep him going, and however humble or bewildered he may feel, his innate value, even natural royalty, is widely noted and proclaimed. One difference is, of course, that while the topsy-turvy rules of children's books are meant to confirm a child's native wonder, the disjointedness of *Malcolm* is meant to confirm an adult's disillusionment. For Malcolm, the grown-up world is not magically beneficent. It is less, not more, than it seems. It is a broken world without organic naturalness, where we have lost our blood ties and live in an arrested season, an autumn that will bring slow death without change.

Because Malcolm's only response to experience is to yawn and smile, it is hard for the reader to care. A feeling of regret, like all the feelings the book invites, is quickly circumvented, and the novel's piecemeal antics offer little for the reader to remember, not even a shared experience of bafflement. *Malcolm* seems a deliberately unexperienced novel, designed to convey the shape of disorder but never explaining a world poised between fantasy and catastrophe.

THE MANSION

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: 1908-1946

Locale: Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

FLEM SNOPEs, president of a bank in Jefferson, Mississippi

LINDA SNOPEs KOHL, the daughter of Eula Varner Snopes, now dead

BARTON KOHL, her husband, a sculptor killed while fighting for the Loyalist cause in Spain

MINK SNOPEs, Flem's cousin, a murderer

JACK HOUSTON, his victim

GAVIN STEVENS, the county attorney

V. K. RATLIFF, a sewing machine salesman

CHARLES MALLISON, Stevens' nephew

J. C. GOODYHAY, a militant rural evangelist

MONTGOMERY WARD SNOPEs, a pornographer used by Flem to have Mink's sentence extended

It is within the power of some writers to hit upon the illuminating figure of speech, sentence, or brief passage that echoes through the total body of their work like a meaningful refrain. Offhand, one thinks of Melville's "Call me Ishmael" at the opening of *Moby Dick*, Walt Whitman's declaration, "I was the man, I suffer'd, I was there," and Fitzgerald's penetration deep into the heart of the great middle-class illusion which lights up his legend of the Twenties, his innocent belief that the very rich are different from the rest of us. A passage of similar import comes at the close of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* after Quentin Compson has related to his Canadian roommate at Harvard the long, violent chronicle of Sutpen's innocence and guilt. At the end Shreve McCannon has one more question to ask. Why does Quentin hate the South? And Quentin's repeated violent, almost desperate reply is that he doesn't hate it.

Quentin's agonized reply betrays something of Faulkner's own ambivalence, the mixed sense of love and guilt in his attitude toward his Mississippi homeland, as well as the ambiguities of character and conduct in his vision of ruin and decay within the Yoknapatawpha County scene. Almost everything he has written has

been an attempt to define the nature and meaning of his moral history of the human effort and its limitations, and he had the habit of reworking his material, of retelling old stories and presenting familiar characters in a different light, in order to extract fresh meanings and deeper understanding—for himself, it seems, as much as for his readers. In the process, over the years, he was engaged in filling in the details of an elaborate design, one part here, another part there, a new detail somewhere else, with each story adding to the totality of the human situation which most readers expected would be fully revealed when the Yoknapatawpha saga was complete. *The Mansion* rounds out one pattern in his complex overall design, completing *Snopes*, a trilogy begun in *The Hamlet* in 1940 and continued in *The Town*, published in 1957.

To readers who know the whole body of Faulkner's writing, his habit of going back to or recombining earlier themes and events is not a matter of great importance. Since all his books lead inevitably into one another, the reappearance of old characters, the telling of a new story in a familiar setting, or the conclusion of an episode began in some other novel or short story merely adds to our sense of familiarity with his people and his re-

gion. No one should be surprised, then, to find in *The Mansion* a second and more revealing account of Mink Snopes's murder of Jack Houston (first told in *The Hamlet*), to discover at last why Flem Snopes framed Montgomery Ward Snopes, the pornographer, with planted moonshine whiskey and made him an agent in getting Mink's prison term extended another twenty years, or to learn new facts about Gavin Stevens' strange, detached love for Flem's wife Eula, an earthy fertility goddess from a crossroads community, and the even stranger relationship between the middle-aged lawyer and Eula's daughter Linda.

If discrepancies developed between the earlier novels and *The Mansion*, Faulkner had an answer for their presence. In a brief foreword he informed the reader that he himself had discovered more contradictions and discrepancies than he hoped his readers would find. He explained that such discrepancies existed because during the thirty-four years he had worked on the Snopes saga he had learned more about man's perplexities and conflicts and more about the people in his chronicle.

Members of the grasping Snopes clan came into Faulkner's fiction as early as *Sartoris*, but he did not give them a book of their own until *The Hamlet* appeared in 1940. That novel, rich in folk comedy, grotesque in its horrors, sharp in social criticism, tells how Ab Snopes, ex-bushwhacker, horse trader, and sharecropper won immunity in Frenchman's Bend because of his reputation as a barn burner and how his son Flem became a clerk in Will Varner's store. Before long other members of the family descend like swarming locusts on the village, nibbling away at its social, economic, and moral life until they have picked it as clean as a ham bone at a Sunday School barbecue. Led by Flem, who has set himself up in the world by marrying Eula Varner when she was pregnant with another man's child, they then move on to Jefferson, the county seat.

There, in *The Town*, Flem sets respectability and wealth as his goals, and by following a career of chicanery, conning, double-dealing, and playing the willing cuckold for years, he ends up as the president of the bank Bayard Sartoris had founded. In the meantime he has cleared his coattails of the more disreputable members of his family—Mink Snopes, the murderer; I. O. Snopes, the bigamist; Montgomery Ward Snopes, a dealer in pornography, and even his wife, who commits suicide as a way of escape from Flem's maneuverings to possess her daughter's inheritance, ruin her lover, and take over the bank.

Presented as a series of episodes narrated by such familiar Faulkner characters as Gavin Stevens, the lawyer; his nephew, Charles Mallison; and V. K. Ratliff, the wry-humored, compassionate, observing sewing-machine salesman, *The Mansion* covers a time span linking Jack Houston's murder with Flem's violent death at the hands of Mink Snopes thirty-eight years later. In this novel, however, much of Flem's trickery and greed for money and power fade into the background and Linda, Eula's daughter, becomes the central figure. After Gavin Stevens has aided her in her escape from Flem at the time of her mother's death, she goes to New York, marries a Jewish sculptor, Barton Kohl, joins the Communist Party to which her husband belongs, and goes with him to Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Kohl and Linda are both casualties of the war. He is killed while flying for the Loyalists and she is deafened when the ambulance she is driving detonates a mine, bursting her eardrums in the explosion. Living in a world of silence, unable to hear her own harsh toneless voice, she returns to Jefferson and settles in the old mansion Flem has remodeled.

Gavin Stevens, who had been in love with Eula Snopes, though never her lover, has already transferred his affections to Linda, who is some sixteen years his junior. Their association never passes

the bounds of friendship, however, and in the end it is Linda who brings about his marriage to another woman. In the course of this novel Charles Mallison grows up and becomes a participant in rather than an observer of the life of Jefferson. V. K. Ratliff continues to ponder the unpredictable, and generally cursed, ways of man. And Flem goes on his Snopesian way until Mink Snopes, released from prison through Linda's efforts, commits the second murder for which he has waited almost forty years. The final irony is that an ignorant, vindictive cousin brings Flem to the end he deserves, but there are many in Jefferson—among them Lawyer Stevens and shrewd, humane Ratliff—who see Flem's death as an act of retribution which the decent people of the town were powerless to administer.

In *The Hamlet* and in the opening sections of *The Town*, Flem Snopes gave every promise of becoming one of Faulkner's great grotesques—a dehumanized, inscrutable, almost sexless, but implacable force of rapacity and greed. As a symbol of the upward climb of predatory Snopeses from mule trading and store-keeping to become the bankers and suspender-snapping politicians of the new South he exhibited those traits of the grotesque and the comic which Faulkner handled with superb ease. But as a respectable member of the social community he is less effective; he remains a background figure, even though we are always conscious that, as Ratliff says, there is no limit to which he will not go, nothing which he will not use to his selfish ends, nobody not likely to suffer or grieve because of him.

Instead, it is his cousin Mink who dominates this novel. In *The Hamlet* he is a creature of pure malice, sly as a weasel, deadly as a rattlesnake. But in *The Mansion* we learn that the killing of Houston was motivated by more than revenge for failure to get free winter graz-

ing for his cow. The killing, as Faulkner now reveals, was a desperate, violent attempt to retain some measure of human dignity denied him by the moods of nature and the ways of men. It is the same with his hatred for Flem. According to Mink's simple code, a kinsman must stand by his kin. When Flem fails to appear at the time of Mink's trial, Mink sees the killing of his cousin as a simple act of justice. Flem's use of Montgomery Ward Snopes to maneuver Mink into an attempt to escape and thus double his sentence convinces Mink that it is Old Master's will that he rid the world of his betrayer. The story of Mink's return from the prison at Parchman, his encounter with J. C. Goodyhay, an ex-Marine sergeant turned evangelist, the buying of the gun, the shooting while Flem sits chewing silently, his eyes fixed on the hammer of Mink's gun as it goes off—these scenes show Faulkner at his best.

Unfortunately, not all of the novel is of this quality. *The Mansion* is a discursive, uneven work that is earthily humorous, ironic, violent, and compassionately reflective at times, but rambling and even dull at others. Like most of Faulkner's writing, it has a sound substructure in social morality, and although it lacks much of the dramatic intensity and impassioned rhetoric of this writer at the top of his bent, it is nevertheless, despite its lapses, a richly imagined and somberly moving story. No one has isolated to better advantage the nature of Snopesism, the relentless, dehumanized drive of greed and gain in our materialistic society. These matters moved Faulkner to indignation, and when he was aroused he generated in his fiction a kind of wild, brooding poetry of primitive vision, elemental power, and deep moral insights. Certainly the idea of man's mortality has seldom been presented more simply or beautifully than in the final pages of this novel, as Mink prepares to return his body to the waiting earth.

MARY BARTON

Type of work: Novel
Author: Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865)
Time: The late 1830's
Locale: Manchester, England
First published: 1848

Principal characters:

MARY BARTON, an apprentice seamstress
JOHN BARTON, Mary's father, a factory hand and union delegate
MARY BARTON, Mary's mother
ESTHER, Mary Barton's aunt, her mother's sister
GEORGE WILSON, a factory hand and friend of John Barton
JANE WILSON, George's wife
JEM WILSON, George's son, a junior engineer and Mary Barton's husband
ALICE WILSON, George's sister
WILL WILSON, Alice's nephew, the husband of Margaret Legh, a sailor
JOB LEGH, a factory hand and naturalist
MARGARET LEGH, his granddaughter, a blind singer and seamstress
HENRY CARSON, a mill owner
HARRY CARSON, his son, in love with Mary Barton

Mary Barton, subtitled "A Tale of Manchester Life," was originally to be entitled *John Barton*. Mary Barton's father, John, is intended to represent Manchester, the city to which Mrs. Gaskell went as a bride at the age of twenty-two from the southern counties in which she had spent most of her life. Thereafter she was identified with the northern city rather than the southern village described in *Cranford*. The two locales represent the twin poles of English life in the mid-nineteenth century. Its substance came from the North and was spent in gracious living within easy reach of London; the preferred settings for novels was much like the countryside presented in Jane Austen's fiction. Similarly, novels dealt with young love ending in marriage. These conventional pressures can be seen in the work of most novelists, including that of Dickens. They account for the importance of Mary Barton in a novel to which she is in many ways unnecessary, a conventional story in an unconventional locale.

She is, however, a recognizable character, while John Barton at times becomes a type: the workingman, the spirit of Man-

chester. His story is meant to be read as an example to the intelligent workingman and a warning to the factory owners. Thus the novel is a vehicle for a program of social action which became increasingly topical and necessary after the distresses of the Hungry Forties, beginning with the great depression in trade and manufacturing in 1839. The starvation which ensued in Manchester and elsewhere was eclipsed by the death toll of the Irish Famine, but at the time it must have greatly affected the young wife of a Unitarian minister who was forced to live with it, unlike the Members of Parliament, the royal family, and society who stayed in London and read the pitiful accounts in the newspapers.

After the death in childbirth of his wife, John is left with his thirteen-year-old daughter Mary. He throws himself into organizing unions, but his appeal for relief from the employers fails, as in the episode in which he walks two miles to the house of Henry Carson, a mill owner, in an attempt to save a dying fellow worker; he is given an order admitting the dying man as an outpatient to the infirmary. The struggling unions, under

Chartist influence, send a monster petition to the House of Commons in London; Barton describes their contemptuous reception of the document. The men become more desperate for work and food, the masters more eager for the resumption of manufacturing. When a foreign order at cut-throat prices in competition with a Continental manufacturing city brings the situation to a head, John determines to frighten the masters by murdering the son and heir of their leader, Henry Carson. Young Harry Carson has, unknown to John, offered to marry Mary, but she rejects him in favor of Jem Wilson, who is accused of the crime of murdering Harry.

Mrs. Gaskell thus combines her presentation of the workingman's situation (in John) with a conventional romance (the owner's son, the honest worker, and a working girl) by turning her novel into a mystery to which the reader holds the key. Thus it is no mystery.

From the middle of the novel the story follows the trial of Jem, and Mary's efforts to save him by bringing into court the one witness, his cousin Will, who can establish Jem's alibi; thus Mary will atone for allowing Harry's attention to trifle with Jem's honest and long-standing affections. Mary turns sleuth and after a heroic pursuit of the sailor, Will, aided by honest sea-faring folk, she succeeds. After an attack of brain fever she recovers to marry Jem. The mystery of Harry Carson's death still remains to be solved. Mrs. Gaskell's solution is to have John Barton succumb to the pangs of guilt and confess to the vengeful Henry Carson. The confession so works on the two men that John dies and Henry Carson, forgetting revenge in Christian charity, takes the lead in improving the lot of the workers' cause. Thus Mrs. Gaskell achieved her purpose in writing the novel.

Her intention may be summed up as somehow establishing a reconciliation or unity between two parts of the Paternoster which appeared to contradict each

other in Manchester, and England, of the 1830's: "Give us this day our daily bread," the worker's first demand or prayer, and "Forgive us our trespasses," which the novelist interprets as a plea for understanding the harsh conditions under which both master and workman labored under laissez-faire and for mitigating by human charity the worst effects of this apparently inescapable system. She does not go so far as to justify the system as God-ordained, as did most of the Church, Press, and Parliament in Victorian times, nor does she insist that if it produces the horrors of tenement living, factory labor, and violent trade cycles of prosperity or want, then it must be changed. This is the basis of much socialist doctrine.

Mrs. Gaskell was a modified Christian Socialist, and her novel takes a stand between the positions of Disraeli in *Sybil*: or, *The Two Nations*, published in 1845, and Kingsley's more rabid London exposé, *Alton Locke*, which appeared in 1850. She explained her views in a long letter to the wife of W. T. Greg, an apologist for the masters who had attacked her novel as unfair to the charity of the masters. (John Barton was also attacked by the *Manchester Guardian* as unrepresentative of the Manchester workman, though a similar slaying had occurred in Manchester in 1831.) In the letter she states that John Barton is the central character and that she intends to make him acknowledge the universality of suffering and hence its necessity "for some good end." This good she contrives rapidly in the close of the novel; much more of the book is explained by her preface to the first edition, where she shows her own bewilderment at the constant alternation of "work" and "want" through no fault of master or workman; she acknowledges that this condition bears more severely on the workman, who gives up the necessities of life when the master has to do without the luxuries. Her premise is that all must be for some purpose, and the novel is an anxious tussle between what she could see around

her and her sorely tested faith. The latter triumphs, but the unacceptability of such a doctrine today dates the novel; and the tension of reaching her solution may account for the increasing melodrama of the later events and the near-bathos of the soul-baring at the end. She reaches calm waters only in the final chapter where the six surviving members of the original thirteen in the Barton, Wilson, and Legh families all emigrate to Canada and a new life. If this conclusion were seriously intended, it would of course overturn the Christian resignation she preaches.

There is some justice to the common criticism that the novel consists of "seven deathbeds and a murder." But this statement simply indicates that Mrs. Gaskell was using the novel to preach a lay sermon; the swivelling between John Barton (the message of the book) and Mary Barton (its conventional vehicle) is never at bottom resolved, though the writer shows great skill in running her chief characters through a reasonably credible series of events. She shows the same sense of bal-

ance in presenting the cases of both workman and master as fairly as she could. The strain of doing so increases as the novel progresses and the parts that still live and that only Mrs. Gaskell could do (since workmen are not novelists) are the early chapters, beginning with the workers' picnic in Green Heys Fields. The physical details of Manchester life in the 1830's are present on every page: the japanned ware on the mantel, eggs from the corner dairy at a penny apiece, and the proprieties of a working-class tea party. The most vivid chapter in the book remains the sixth, "Poverty and Death," where she describes the incredible squalor and damp of a Manchester slum cellar, complete with naked children, a starving wife, a husband dying of typhus on a sodden heap of straw. Scenes such as these must have come directly from Mrs. Gaskell's own experience, and there is nothing like them in English literature until we come much later to *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* and *Love on the Dole*.

THE MASTERS

Type of work: Novel

Author: C. P. SNOW (1905-)

Time: 1937

Locale: Cambridge University, England

First published: 1951

Principal characters:

VERNON ROYCE, the incumbent Master, Professor of Comparative Religion, dying of cancer

LADY MURIEL, his wife

JOAN ROYCE, their daughter

PAUL JAGO, Senior Tutor, Professor of Literature, and candidate for the mastership

MRS. JAGO, his wife

REDVERS THOMAS ARBUTHNOT CRAWFORD, a biologist, Jago's major opponent

MAURICE HARVEY LAWRENCE GAY, Professor of Icelandic and Senior Fellow of the college

EUSTACE PILBROW, a classicist, the friend of lost revolutions and undiscovered writers

ALBERT THEOPHILUS DESPARD-SMITH, a cleric, the former Bursar

GODFREY HAROLD WINSLOW, the Bursar, a classicist

ARTHUR BROWN, Junior Tutor, historian, and leader of the Jago faction

C. P. CHRYSTAL, Dean, a classicist

LEWIS ELIOT, a lawyer, the narrator of the novel

ROY CLEMENT EDWARD CALVERT, an orientalist, Eliot's closest friend
RONALD EDMUND NIGHTINGALE (ALEC), a chemist
FRANCIS ERNEST GETLIFFE, a physicist
WALTER JOHN LUKE, a physicist

One of the reasons for C. P. Snow's success in dealing with political behavior is the breadth of his definition of politics as the power-relations of men in an organized society. The definition includes party politics, political ideology, the economic and social forces, the personal likes and dislikes that influence decisions, and the subtle art of politicking. Snow suggests that all these forces and pressures are complicated, that men, even at their most reasonable, can be mercurial and unpredictable, and finally that political activity resists easy analysis.

His view is both analytical and moral. His sympathies are to an extent with the manipulators, with those who seek and know how to use power, but he tries to show that the art of manipulation is dependent on sympathetic awareness of other men. The man of power needs to be realistic and, at times, cold-blooded, but he must also know the complexities of the emotions and to some extent sympathize with them.

In *The Masters*, as in the other published novels of the *Strangers and Brothers* series Lewis Eliot is both protagonist and narrator. The sequence traces his emotional and intellectual growth, his climb through the strata of society and on what Snow calls "the ladders of power," and, through Eliot's experiences, changes in English life since the end of World War I. Eliot's status is unusual in modern fiction: he is both actor and observer, agent and narrator, the chronicler of change and an example of the changes.

The Masters is probably the most self-contained of the novels: it serves as a political handbook, explaining the ways and means by which power is, in one isolated but representative situation, acquired and handled. It is almost as if Snow were using the novel to say: this, in microcosm, is how the world of decisions and affairs works. To make his way, Lewis

Eliot has had to learn about this world, not only its mechanisms, but also its limitations. He has learned, and the story of a Cambridge University college electing a new Master—publicly insignificant in a country making ready for war—is an example, almost a scientific model, of the workings of the world in which important decisions are made, in which the personal lives of many are at stake.

But to the characters of the novel the decision is far from unimportant. The college, anticipating a vacancy because Vernon Royce, the incumbent Master, is dying of cancer, divides into two hard-core parties, with several "floaters." Paul Jago, the Senior Tutor (roughly the equivalent of an American academic Dean), is emotional, insightful, ambitious, and, as a scholar, undistinguished. Politically he is a Conservative, but he cares relatively little for doctrine of any sort. His support is led by Arthur Brown, Junior Tutor, and C. P. Chrystal. Brown and Chrystal have been running the college, from behind the scenes, for years; both, but especially Brown, are astute and unobtrusive politicians. They are joined by Eliot and his closest friend, Roy Calvert and, in the first meetings, by R. E. Nightingale, a disgruntled scientist who has failed to live up to early expectations in his career.

Opposing Jago is R. T. A. Crawford, a research biologist of international fame and, nationally, a staunch liberal. His group is led by G. H. Winslow, a caustic, sardonic classicist and the loser in the previous election, and includes A. T. Despard-Smith, an incompetent clergyman and former Bursar of the college, M. H. L. Gay, an eighty-year-old Icelandic scholar of considerable fame, and Francis Getliffe, a youngish scientist of great promise and uncompromising liberalism.

Eustace Pilbrow, an elderly classicist, and Walter Luke, a brilliant young scien-

tist, soon announce their intentions to vote for Jago. Nightingale, disgruntled over his seventh successive rejection by the Royal Society, switches, out of a curious kind of hero worship, to the Crawford faction, and the sides are thus set by the time the incumbent Master dies.

The rosters illustrate an important point: none of the standard classifications that might be applied describe the preferences. Getliffe supports Crawford out of agreement over national politics; no Conservative, he feels, should be elected to anything in a time of national crisis. But Lewis Eliot, who is as far to the left politically as Getliffe, prefers Jago. There are, similarly, Conservatives on both sides, as well as classicists, scientists, men of religion, atheists, old men, and young men. Snow takes pains to illustrate the diversity of motivation among the Fellows, partly to suggest that playing the game of politics calls for infinite sensitivity to the various factors influencing any man's decision.

The most curious instance is that of Nightingale. His decision to switch sides comes immediately after he hears from Crawford, a member of the Royal Society, that he has missed election to the Society once again. Rather than envying Crawford, as one would expect, he begins to see him as a hero and becomes his most ardent and unscrupulous supporter, trying to capitalize on Roy Calvert's fits of melancholy and Luke's vulnerability as an untenured Fellow. His attack on Mrs. Jago is the most extreme. He circulates a memo comparing the candidates and lists Mrs. Jago as one of Jago's handicaps, and he makes certain that a copy of the memo gets to Mrs. Jago, for he is well aware of her pathological insecurity.

With a majority of Fellows voting needed to elect, Chrystal, against the better judgment of Brown, contrives an agreement between Crawford and Jago to vote for each other, thus to insure against a stalemate which would take the selection of the Master away from the college. Thus Jago, going into the final

weeks before the election, has a majority of seven to six, sufficient to win. But Eustace Pilbrow, after a visit to the Continent, decides he cannot possibly vote for a Conservative and switches to Crawford. This defection is compensated for when Calvert and Eliot convince M. L. H. Gay to retract his commitment to Crawford; both believe that he will finally vote for Jago, and they are correct.

The coup de grace comes from Chrystal. Never so strongly for Jago as his associate Brown, he chafes increasingly at Jago's ambition and frequent lack of taste and tact. It is suggested that Chrystal is happy with Jago only so long as he thinks him manageable. For whatever the reason, he switches to the Crawford side at the last minute. The election goes to Crawford, seven to six, with Getliffe, Nightingale, Chrystal, Jago, Despard-Smith, Winslow, and Pilbrow constituting the majority.

The novel ends ironically. The most astute of the college politicians fail: those with the greatest measure of sensitivity are finally incapable of manipulating their colleagues; and Chrystal, one of the best of the managers, destroys the cause for which he had worked so diligently. Snow, true to his analytical bias, shows the limitations as well as the subtleties of politicking or, to put it differently, shows that he who would understand the power relations among men must understand that men rarely act solely in terms of power, that man's political behavior is the function of many variables. That artful politicians fail to win an election points not to the insufficiency of the art, but rather to the necessity of understanding power and the people who hold it. Remembering that Snow is primarily a novelist using politics as subject matter, rather than a politician using the novel form to discuss politics, the reader should note that the tactic of observing men in the political forum as a means of exploring the interactions between their public and their private selves and among each other is an extremely successful one.

MATTER AND MEMORY

Type of work: Philosophy

Author: Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

First published: 1896

Matter and Memory is Bergson's second major work, falling between *Time and Free Will*, his doctoral thesis, and *Creative Evolution*, perhaps his best-known work. *Matter and Memory* has, however, been called Bergson's most unjustly neglected volume by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, renowned contemporary existentialist. Like all of his work, it is a philosophical effort to transcend Cartesian dualism, and, without postulating a divinely created spirit in man, to bring back, nevertheless, a more complex and supple sense of the profundity of human nature than that afforded by mechanistic science and philosophy of the nineteenth century.

Bergson begins with a discussion of the brain, of how the science of his day says it works and how he thinks it works. Everywhere Bergson is concerned with the Cartesian problem: the world of spirit and the world of matter, and the Cartesian inability to resolve the distinction in any philosophically satisfactory manner. Bergson shows that, by postulating that all reality is outside the mind, in objects, we reduce the mind to a passive receiver shaped and determined by outer flow. Clearly, our rich inner life and its amazing variety of self-created choices negate these premises of realist philosophy. The opposing point of view—the idealist one as espoused by Bishop Berkeley, that the only reality is within the mind, and the world outside cannot exist, for only our senses can be said to exist—is just as reductive and therefore distorting. Bergson's effort is to see how mind transcends matter, how it is something more than its capacity to think, because of its power to use images new and old in shaping a present act that did not exist before except in potential.

Arguing that the mind is much more

than a complex camera, Bergson analyzes at length the problem of memory. Drawing upon neurologists and psychologists, he observes that memory as we experience it is not localized anywhere in the brain; it is some power beyond impressions contained in cell structures. Through discussing clinical reports of visual and auditory aphasia, Bergson shows us that we cannot say where in the brain memory is. Brain lesions do not destroy memory itself; they merely debilitate the power to use memory.

There are, Bergson theorizes, two kinds of memory, and his new understanding of the mind results from this proposal. Ordinary memory is the string of impressions that have been filed away as they were received by pure—that is, instantaneous—perception. Ordinary memory in the mind operates in much the same way as it does in an electronic computer: the perception programs the mind with a store of impressions. But pure memory is a power, or a spirit, by which we control and organize these impressions. Pure memory is the survival of the perceptions of images, when the perception is no longer there. This is an active, not a passive, function, for we use memory to inform and direct our lives. Such a hypothesis transcends both realism and idealism by postulating this power that is of matter yet beyond, that takes its material from space (the world of objects) yet has its reality in time. (This is a form of *durée*, or duration, Bergson's famed description of the inner life of man that has had such a marked influence upon introspective and stream-of-consciousness novelists like Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, who used Bergsonian concepts to guide them in their fictional explorations of the interior consciousnesses of their protago-

nists.) This pure memory and the consciousness it creates are of the mind yet not "in" it in the way the realist or the idealist maintains. Consider the coat that hangs upon the nail, Bergson comments. They are closely connected, for without the nail the coat falls. Yet does the shape of the nail determine the shape of the coat? So consciousness and pure memory are dependent upon the brain, yet are quite different in their qualities from that physical organ.

Memory is not a regression into the past but a movement up through planes of consciousness to the present perception. The relationship between spirit and matter is misunderstood in our inability to comprehend the complexities of time and space. We too often set up at one extreme an infinitely divisible extension, and at the other sensations that are absolutely inextensive. This of course is Zeno's classic problem about the unreality of the arrow in motion. Motion for Bergson is not a multitude of discrete positions; it is the making of a separate category of existence in time, in its duration. There are many different kinds of duration. To perceive can mean to condense, to immobilize long moments of time into brief synoptic moments. In perception we seize something that outruns perception itself. That which is real process to us is something between divided extension and pure inextension, something Bergson would call tension. It encompasses both heterogeneity of qualities and the apparent homogeneity of movements. It is capable of belonging to one individual moment or image, yet be part of the rhythm of the whole.

All of this consciousness is directed toward bringing potential humanity into action. Throughout, Bergson calls upon his readers to stop studying man like a vegetable. Both body and body's spirit are designed for action, and are to be defined, if at all, by the capacity to act. Pure memory serves to contract the growing number of ordinary memory impressions into present consciousness, thus giving us the ability and wherewithal to decide

what to do. Thus the end of this study leads both author and reader directly into *Creative Evolution*, published in 1907, in which informed consciousness, or *élan vital* is postulated as the causative factor for a consciously willed and directed evolution of higher organisms, instead of the arbitrary necessitous survival of the fittest inherent in the Darwinian scheme.

Most of today's critics agree that, though it is unlikely that Bergson's work will survive in its original form, his influence still moves and shapes much contemporary thought. Ironically, as Thomas Hanna, a recent commentator, observes, Bergson, the philosophical antagonist of the materialistic science of his day, depended too heavily upon the science he was opposing for his evidence. For example, his material cited in *Matter and Memory* concerning the storage of memory images in the brain is erroneous, for science has shown since that the brain does store such impressions and that they can be evoked through stimuli. More importantly, Hanna suggests that Bergson was awed by physical science but unfortunately lacking in a thorough schooling in it. Hanna contrasts Bergson with Albert North Whitehead, the mathematician who became a philosopher and carried out a line of thought not unlike Bergson's, but in a much more comprehensive way. Non-scientist Bergson was a metaphysician too often ignorant of science to develop his metaphysics comprehensively.

But Bergson lives on in his influence upon today's existentialists. His analysis here, for example, of consciousness informed by pure memory, which is a creative process and not a passive reaction, leads directly to existential freedom. His concept of the individual consciousness in the moment but not contained by it is inherent in the existentialist's concept of the importance of existence, in contrast to the traditional essence, which is an absolute that is contrary to the moment of present life that both Bergson and the existentialists insist is the only reality that man can ever know.

MEMENTO MORI

Type of work: Novel
Author: Muriel Spark (1918-)
Time: The 1950's
Locale: London
First published: 1959

Principal characters:

GODFREY COLSTON, 87, a rich, active octogenarian,
DAME LETTIE COLSTON, 79, his sister,
CHARMIAN PIPER COLSTON, 85, his wife, a former best-selling author,
GUY LEET, about 75, a crippled writer-critic,
PERCY MANNERING, almost 80, a savage poet, and
DR. ALEC WARNER, 79, a scientific documentor of old age, all old friends with entangled past lives
MISS JEAN TAYLOR, 82, the religious former companion to Charmian,
MISS EMELINE ROBERTS, 76, a one-time theater cashier,
MISS OR MRS. LYDIA REEWES-DUNCAN, 78, a writer of wills,
MADAM TROTSKY, the first to die of a stroke,
MRS. FANNY GREENE, afflicted with arterio-sclerosis, and
MISS DOREEN VALVONA, a believer in astrology, a group known as the Grannies, twelve inhabitants of the Maude Long Medical Ward for the female aged in a welfare state hospital
MRS. MABLE PETTIGREW, 73, a greedy nurse and companion to the aged
CHIEF INSPECTOR HENRY MORTIMER, 70, retired, who investigates the telephone calls for the C.I.D.

John Donne's famous theme, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls," is moved forward into the twentieth century in Muriel Spark's psychological fantasy and interpreted as the strident bell of the modern telephone. An anonymous caller has been ringing up a circle of elderly London friends with a single, cryptic message, "Remember you must die." Each hears the stranger's voice differently, renders the message in his own way, and experiences his own manner of panic. The police have no clues to their persecutor who is, of course, the Death already ripening in each of these aging characters.

Dame Lettie is writing a letter when the message comes to her for the eighth time. As usual, she notifies police and takes refuge with her brother Godfrey, who assures her that some maniac must be responsible for the call. Godfrey, obsessed by the necessity to retain his faculties in his old age, has his own messenger—quite common, with a lisp; and so does his wife Charmian, a stroke victim, who

thinks the caller is young and perhaps lonely.

On a superficial level, the novel is disguised as a thriller of pursuit. The Colstons and their friends of fifty years join forces to solve the cruel hoax, but they are unwilling to face the possibility that they may be the pursued, with mortality their pursuer. Because their lives have been closely woven together for so long, that mortality has been in the making for half a century; and old quarrels and barely remembered love affairs intrude on the chase. Thus the novel becomes a macabre and comic analysis of old age as the natural outcome of the years which preceded it. Those who have had no tranquillity do not now acquire it late, under death's shadow. The gossips are restricted only to the degree their memories have grown unreliable, and the egotist at twenty is an incontinent egotist in the end.

There are two main groups of characters, aged seventy to one hundred, to whom Death announces himself. The

first circle of old friends has been, at one time, famous, scandalous, or rich. Dame Lettie Colston was once active in penal and welfare reform. Charmian Piper Colston was a best-selling author whose mind is now clear on only one subject, the books she wrote. Percy Mannering once wrote poetry; he vows if he now rose to Heaven and found Dylan Thomas there, he would prefer to go to Hell. His telephone caller sounds like William Butler Yeats. Alec Warner, who almost married Jean Taylor, now devotes his life to cherishing famous ancients—Goethe, Ninon de Lenclos, Renoir, Verdi. For ten years Warner has been making a scientific study of his declining friends, their symptoms of dotage, and every fast pulse and crow's foot is carefully cross-referenced on his index cards. Guy Leet, Charmian's long-ago lover, has been a literary and dramatic critic. One of the tragicomic scenes of the novel is a violent fencing match as he and Mannering duel with walking canes over a critique of Ernest Dowson. Godfrey Colston, a member of a rich brewer family disgruntled by his wife's cultural superiority, is an old rake who still totters to Chelsea once a week to stare at a woman's garter for a fee.

This is the group which gets its intimation of mortality by telephone. The second set of characters, known as the Grannies, live in a hospital for the aged. Reminders of death are perpetual. Jean Taylor, pointing to advanced geriatric crones where they drool in their crib beds, calls them "memento mori." The Grannies, who shout at night and ask nervously in the morning what they have said, are cantankerous, irrational, selfish, little different from the Colston group to whom they form echo and counterpoint. Jean Taylor, Charmian's former companion, describes the condition of them all by saying that to be over seventy is like being on a battlefield in wartime, living survivors among the dead and dying. A Catholic convert, she is one of the first to realize who must be telephoning her for-

mer employer and friends.

The Catholic convert is one of Miss Spark's frequent fictional characters; so is a "demon figure," here Percy Mannering. Typical, too, is what one critic has called Miss Spark's vision of human nature as a Chinese puzzle. Under the pressure of the mysterious calls, each character gives himself away, reveals he is more complicated than he seems, that even the underside of his double life is doubly entangled in the dual lives of others. Even an aged lunatic whom Warner has been studying for his geriatric file is found to be the former husband of a friend, who was the bigamous wife of Guy Leet, who blackmailed Charmian Colston, who . . . and so the chain of involvement grows. The unraveling of this tapestry by Miss Spark's nimble fingers could, it appears, go on forever without events seeming forced or too opportune. She often approaches the very edge of the too-neat coincidence, but she draws back in just that instant before the ropes of her *deus ex machina* can be heard to creak off-stage.

With the device of the recurring telephone calls as suspense and plot, Miss Spark has proceeded to write a devastating, cold-blooded account of the reality of old age, in which lavender and old lace are used chiefly to wipe up spittle, whether in a nursing home or private boudoir. One of the elders is blackmailed; one is murdered. They feast upon one another's deaths, failures, cancers. Warner volunteers to deliver bad news to his friends so that he can get an on-the-spot reading or rising pulse and blood pressure for his files. Those files on the aging process, his life's work, are completely destroyed when his apartment building burns. Mrs. Pettigrew, a vicious and greedy nurse who plunders her patients like a leech, inherits a fortune and outlives them all.

To only a few does death give a gentle reminder: to Jean Taylor, who suffers pain but uses it to magnify God; to the retired police inspector, whose caller has

the soft voice of a woman; and to Char-
mian who, touched by guilt and bolstered
by a late literary revival, achieves
serenity.

If the novel has any flaw, it is probably
that temporary weakening which allows
the caller to be too candidly named as
Death himself, a recognition that berates
the artistic obvious. The theme did not
require such explicit announcement; it
has its roots in Rilke's "Notebooks of
Malte Laurids Brigge," which deal so
well with the innate death. It is not
Rilke, however, whom Miss Spark elects
to quote on the frontispiece but Yeats,

Traherne's meditations, and the "four last
things to be ever remembered," including
Death, from the Penny Catechism.

Miss Spark was only forty years old
when her tour de force on old age ap-
peared. The first of her novels to win
wide critical acclaim, it remains the most
widely praised. Its mixture of terror and
pity, comedy with tragedy, its adroit and
unpretentious prose, the economical but
compressed content, and the dissection of
human life in its own logical extreme, are
characteristics which have made it a con-
temporary classic.

MEN AND WOMEN

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Robert Browning (1812-1889)

First published: 1855

The title *Men and Women* was origi-
nally appended to two volumes of poems
containing fifty-one of Browning's most
celebrated works. Beginning with the col-
lected edition of 1863, the number of
poems appearing under this title was re-
duced to thirteen, only eight of which
had been in the 1855 edition of *Men and
Women*. Of the other forty-three poems,
thirty were thereafter grouped by Brown-
ing under *Dramatic Lyrics* (the most fa-
mous of these being "Love Among the
Ruins," "A Toccata of Galuppi's,"
"Saul," "De Gustibus—," and "Two in
the Campagna"); twelve became *Dra-
matic Romances* (including "Childe Rol-
land to the Dark Tower Came," "The
Statue and the Bust," "The Last Ride
Together," and "A Grammarian's Fun-
eral"); "In a Balcony" came eventually
to be listed separately, under its own
title. But those poems which remained
as *Men and Women* include several
of Browning's greatest dramatic mono-
logues: "Fra Lippo Lippi," "An Epistle
Containing the Strange Medical Experi-
ence of Karshish, the Arab Physician,"
"Bishop Blougram's Apology," "The
Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint

Praxed's Church," "Andrea del Sarto,"
and "Cleon."

Men and Women was Browning's only
important publication during the period
of his marriage to Elizabeth Barrett.
These were the years when Browning
made Italy his home and when his output
of poetry was markedly curtailed by a
number of other interests: his family, his
dabbling in painting and sculpture, and
his study of Italian Renaissance art. But
the quality of his poetry was never higher
than in the poems produced during this
period. It was in *Men and Women*,
above all, that he brought the dramatic
monologue to perfection; and, needless to
say, his current reputation is largely due
to his mastery of this form.

Life in Italy suited Browning, and the
atmosphere of that land permeates many
of the poems in this collection. Some are
Italian simply in landscape, such as the
humorous "Up at a Villa—Down in the
City." In other poems, such as "A Sere-
nade at the Villa," "By the Fire-Side,"
and "Two in the Campagna," it is appar-
ent that Browning's primary interest is in
examining human relationships which
could take place anywhere; the scene is

Italy but setting is incidental. Other poems, however, draw upon distinctly Italian sources: curious customs, for example ("Holy-Cross Day"), and local legends ("The Statue and the Bust"). In later years Browning would often say that "Italy was my university"; what he had studied at that university was Italian art. "Old Pictures in Florence" reflects his interest in that art, as do "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea del Sarto," both of which are imaginary character studies of real Renaissance painters. "The Guardian-Angel" is based on an actual painting (as the subtitle indicates): "A Picture at Fano." "De Gustibus—" contains the clearest statement of Browning's love for Italy; there he writes:

Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'

The Italian element is, however, less important than another personal influence, that of the poet's marriage. Although the love poems in *Men and Women* are not necessarily autobiographical, they do reflect, at least indirectly, the relationship between Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. In "By the Fire-Side" communication is complete; love is serene. But in "The Last Ride Together," "Andrea del Sarto," "Love in a Life," "Life in a Love," and "Any Wife to Any Husband," communication breaks down and love fails. "Two in the Campagna" deals with

Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

Thus Browning indicates the gap between love in dreams and in reality. Most of these poems dramatize a love-situation and are content to evoke it without commenting on it. "The Statue and the Bust," however, includes a flatly stated moral:

Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize . . .

and never miss that prize because of
wasted opportunities.

Some have suggested that in examining the vicissitudes of love Browning was revealing flaws in his own marriage. "A Lover's Quarrel," for example, does involve disagreement over two subjects about which he and his wife differed: spiritualism (she believed in it; he scoffed at it) and Napoleon III, Emperor of France (she was an admirer; he was not). But the evidence is by no means conclusive, and the one poem in *Men and Women* which is openly autobiographical, "One Word More: To E.B.B.," is Browning's dedication to his wife, not only of the book, but of himself.

Many of Browning's favorite themes are broached in the poems of *Men and Women*. The idea that the course of a man's life may turn upon a moment's decision is expressed in "The Statue and the Bust." The idea that "A man's reach should exceed his grasp" is the subject of "Andrea del Sarto," as well as "Old Pictures in Florence," and "A Grammarian's Funeral." Browning's attitudes towards religion and religious belief are presented in "Saul," "Cleon," "An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician," and "Bishop Blougram's Apology."

It must be admitted that the present age is little interested in most of Browning's opinions *per se*; we may be no nearer than the Victorians to solving the problems which beset Browning and his contemporaries, but we tend to prefer more recent attempts to solve them. Browning's ideas about art are, however, perfectly current; they have a bearing not only on art in general but, more particularly, on his own poetry. A number of the poems in *Men and Women* contain, implicitly or explicitly, theories of art which help to explain what Browning was, in his poetry, attempting to do.

"I only knew one poet in my life," says the speaker in "How It Strikes a Contemporary," and the poem itself is in many ways Browning's own description of what a poet should be. The poet, first of all, looks the world full in the face; he

is no idle dreamer. He sees life and he sees it whole, taking "such cognizance of men and things" that he can truthfully be called "a recording chief-inquisitor. . . ." This poem can be seen as a veiled defense of Browning's own tendency to write about characters and events which may not, in the dilettantish sense, have been deemed sufficiently "poetic." If, in Browning's view, the poet's proper sphere is life as it really is, the poet's function is nonetheless an exalted one: he writes in the service of God. The poet described in "How It Strikes a Contemporary"

. . . walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then
went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the
King

"Memorabilia," a slight poem, is chiefly remembered because it alludes to Shelley—one of Browning's early enthusiasms and the subject of Browning's only important prose essay. "Popularity" is a tribute to another of Browning's favorite poets, John Keats. In this poem there is further allusion to Browning's belief that the poet's role is somehow linked with the divine mission. One of Browning's most explicit statements about what poetry should aim to be is found in "Transcendentalism": a Poem in Twelve Books." Here he obviously prefers Keatsian or Shelleyan "song" to the over-labored, earnest "thought" which characterized so much bad Victorian poetry. One poet, speaking to another, says:

'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's
our art:

Whereas you please to speak these
naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and
sounds.

Browning has no objection to thought in poetry, but it should not be presented baldly, for its own sake. Rather, it should be draped "in sights and sounds."

In the two dramatic monologues which are generally acknowledged to be the

finest poems in *Men and Women*, "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea del Sarto," Browning gives further insights into his theories of art. It is obvious that, in bringing these two Renaissance painters to life, his own sympathies as an artist lie completely with Lippo Lippi and not at all with Andrea del Sarto. He depicts the latter as a skilled craftsman whose hand and eye are deft, but who has only "something of a heart." His paintings are accomplished, but cold-blooded and uninspired. In the poem Andrea del Sarto comes to realize that he has failed to infuse into his work the quality of a great soul. An artist's success, Browning is saying, resides not merely in his technical perfection but also in his ability to give sufficiently of himself to make his work burn with the true "light of God."

In seeing the creation of a work of art as a moral act Browning is not advocating the kind of art which merely moralizes, though Browning's own late poems, in the years after *The Ring and the Book*, frequently do just that. Fra Lippo Lippi's monastic superiors have forced him to paint pious pictures which will

' . . . say to folk—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday.'

They have told him that his purpose is not to depict the world but to "forget there's such a thing as flesh" and "to paint the souls of men." Lippi himself, however, is too honest an artist, and too fully a man, to be content with their dictates:

. . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of!

He loves the things of the world but not merely in and for themselves. He sees the beauty of the world as God's creation and therefore not to be despised. The artist, he believes (and Browning with him), by portraying finite beauty comes closest to portraying infinite beauty as well. "I never saw," says Lippi, "beauty with no soul at all." In his characterization of this hookey-playing Italian monk Browning

has given us, at a distance, a veritable portrait of himself as an artist.

When we have sifted Browning's poems for their ideas, even those about art, we have still done him less than justice as a poet. His greatness ultimately is to be located in his creation of memorable characters: the Chaucerian Fra Lippo Lippi, the self-pitying Andrea del Sarto, the wily Bishop Blougram, the Greek Cleon, the Arab Karshish, the dying Bishop concerned about his tomb, and a whole gallery of lovers in a splendid variety of moods. Browning's early failures as a writer for the stage taught him a valuable lesson: that his abilities were suited

for the delineation of "Action in Character, rather than Character in Action." His psychological studies of "Action" within his justly famous characters, particularly in the dramatic monologues, are the main basis for the reputation his name holds today.

It is interesting to note that, during his lifetime, Browning's fame came slowly. The sale of so great a collection of poems as *Men and Women* was disappointingly slow: no second edition was ever called for. It was not until the publication of *Dramatis Personae*, in 1864, that he began to receive the recognition he deserved.

THE MIGHTY AND THEIR FALL

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892-)

Time: Indefinitely between 1900 and 1914

Locale: An English mansion otherwise unidentified

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

NINIAN MIDDLETON, the widowed father

EGBERT, his oldest son

LAVINIA, his oldest daughter

AGNES, his fourteen-year-old daughter

HENGIST, his eleven-year-old son

LEAH, his ten-year-old daughter

HUGO MIDDLETON, Ninian's half brother

SELINA MIDDLETON, the grand matriarch of the family, mother of Ninian

RANSOM MIDDLETON, the prodigal son who returns

TERESA CHILTON, the widow who marries Ninian

MISS STARKIE, the "children's" governess

AINGER, the butler

THE COOK, a listener at keyholes

"JAMES," the houseboy

The novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett are perpetual attacks upon the falsity of the clichés most of us live by, upon even the cliché world-view which most of us believe explains our actions. This preoccupation can be observed even in the way the actions of her novels overturn the acting out of platitudes that the titles lead us to expect. One grows to expect the overthrow of the presumed obvious.

Pastors are ungodly, masters are mas-

tered, brothers and sisters are as likely to be related incestuously as filially, parents and children battle and endure one another as frequently as they love or honor. The Mighty in Miss Compton-Burnett's novel are mighty in their own eyes alone and their fall (from no great height) leaves them very little changed; in fact, they remain very much as they were.

Live attentively for a time in the highly original world Miss Compton-

Burnett creates through her novels and one becomes immune to surprise, though not to the delight of the startling insight she expresses with an art no writer of our century has surpassed. Miss Compton-Burnett's destruction of the clichés that underlie the appearance of normal activity is so total that it enforces a revaluation of values.

The Mighty and Their Fall is as good as anything she has written. The necessary prop of plot creaks with unexpected entrances, coincidences, twists in direction that stretch the limits of verisimilitude, just as plot does in Shakespeare, Sophocles, and Dickens.

Widowed Ninian Middleton—surrounded by two children early in their twenties, one at adolescence, two (Hengist, eleven, and Leah, ten) in their precocity—asks widowed Teresa Chilton to marry him without telling her about his family. Shrewdly surveying the situation, she rejects him; wisely reconsidering her prospects of finding a man she likes more who is less surrounded, she writes a letter of qualified acceptance. Lavinia, the twenty-year-old daughter who seems mature because she is by nature an autocrat and an intellectual, as well as the companion of her widower father, purloins the letter, blames its disappearance on her grandmother Selina, surprisingly asserts herself (out of jealousy generated by the Electra complex that is nearly always suggested when daughter and father are together in a separated family?) by agreeing to marry her uncle by adoption.

This she is able to do after Ninian marries, after the prodigal real uncle returns to die and leave his money to her, after her father tries to steal the will that leaves control of Uncle Ransom's money to her so that he will have it. Well and sparsely told, the creaks are almost soundless and the characters' witty wisdom would keep one with the novel if the not impossible plot thundered improbability, as it does not.

As usual, but with the engaging variety of differentiation and penetration one

always expects to find in Miss Compton-Burnett's work, the characters, their wording of their reactions, and the wisdom that comes from the reader's observation of their commingling make the novel excellent. In their conversations, and it is conversation you want to overhear attentively, all amenities and inanities are omitted. No one neglects to say a harsh truth that may bring a brusque blessing; each character serves himself first, without ruthlessness or a pretense of saintliness. Unlofty, accurately humdrum human action prevails in talk and deed as a rule. And the reader comes to agree with Hugo, an amiable do-nothing who is willing, with only a slight twang of conscience, to marry his niece while he thinks that is what she really is, when he says that we cannot like people in lofty moods because they create discomfort.

All the characters Ivy Compton-Burnett conjugates in *The Mighty and Their Fall* find it difficult to speak without being wise wittily or without erasing a commonplace stupidity. Selina, for once a grand matriarch with more wisdom than severity, stands out heroically in the constricted field of the family. She is like her expressions that fluctuate between dour disillusionment and unthinking benevolence, and it is the good fortune of the family that her advice usually is taken, that the others end up nearly glad, finding the little that is more than the looked for "much."

All the others, except Egbert, have moments of revelation and revealing wisdom. The least likable (once again) is the central character, Ninian, who, far from being a hero, is a gradually revealed respectable man of family who knows best how to pity himself, get for himself, and think only of himself. Next to Selina and the younger children, always a chorus of precociously frightening maturity, the "bad" characters come off best: Lavinia, who is willing to marry incestuously to escape with Hugo from Ninian's second marriage; Hugo, who makes good use of idleness to cultivate acceptance

and wit; Ransom, the prodigal who returns with money made in ways made acceptable by circumstances and time.

The "sinners," like Lavinia, are not "better" for their "stumbles," but they are wiser simply because they are what they are. This recognition of what one is and of how he is conditioned socially and universally appears to be the closest to content that does not deserve contempt achievable by one of Ivy Compton-Burnett's characters. It comes naturally to the children, young, returns after the stumbles of growing up have attained sufficient number, comes to the servants through keyholes and to us by turning pages that make lively what, experienced directly, would be pain alleviated occasionally by the good moments allowed by "Someone."

Perhaps that is why Ivy Compton-Burnett is so highly praised and so much less widely known than she deserves. Her universe, like Hardy's and Sophocles', promises neither nirvana nor security nor escape from mortality. Because it cannot be undone, as one of her characters says, the past is always in the one safe place,

the past. Miss Compton-Burnett's witty-wise truths come at the reader with such barrage-like rapidity, destroy so thoroughly cherished wishful-washy platitudes, that the average mind reels and longs for comfort and tranquillity. With near perfection in her chosen peculiar art, her novels—*The Mighty and Their Fall* not the least of these—dramatize the conflict between what seems and what presently, in time's flow, will contradict its seeming. This should not bring discomfort to those who can bear maturity. One may rejoice in her severe novels and laugh even when he knows how swiftly laughter's course disappears. Her recurrent dim (not dismal) view is not unkind but uncovering and relentless. Each of us had better recognize, as her wisest characters do, that all have within us the ability to do any ill or good.

Like Yeats in his later poetry, Ivy Compton-Burnett appears to have looked so deeply into the hell men have always made so capably that she can be gay without avoiding the somberness of ultimate truth.

THE MIND OF PRIMITIVE MAN

Type of work: Anthropological study

Author: Franz Boas (1858-1942)

First published: 1911

The best of Franz Boas' work in anthropology exists in his collected papers, and his most important influence is undoubtedly upon his pupils, whom he trained to revolutionize the study of anthropology in America and eventually Europe as well. *The Mind of Primitive Man* has its significance in being one of the few books for the general public that Boas ever wrote. It presents the work of Boas' generation in comparative anthropology, with special emphasis upon the problem of race, which so beset the 1930's and 1940's. As a comparativist, Boas is much concerned to study primitive culture objectively, and not to judge

other cultures from European prejudice, as so many social scientists of preceding generations had done.

Boas proposes to examine the question of race first to find what, if anything, one may say about this disputed question. Then he will analyze primitive culture and see if in any way it determines racial characteristics. Reviewing many writers of an earlier generation, Boas shows that while different racial characteristics exist, no one has ever been able to say specifically what cultural significance such racial characteristics have. The work of Tylor, Frazer, Durkheim, and Lévy-Bruhl, at the turn of the century, shows

that differences in culture are more important in man's history than differences in race. The primitives of Australia, Africa, and America are more like one another than they are like any ethnic group in Europe. Race is formed by heredity, not by environment, but there are too many variables for anyone to show consequences for culture from racial causes. The body forms of the races of man are not stable either; malnutrition will stunt a race and raising the standard of living will increase height and weight.

No matter how primitive man is in the historical era, he is more like civilized man than any deceased prototype. All races, Boas finds, are equal to the so-called white race in faculties; there is no race on the globe today that, given proper opportunities and technical equipment, cannot reach that level of civilization enjoyed by the most favored groups. No significant relations whatever exist between race and culture; custom and language can change within a race. Boas cites the African, brought to North and South America and developing different characteristics in each locale. People may remain constant in anatomical type and language but change in culture, remain constant in type but change in language, or remain constant in language but change in anatomical type and culture. The interdependence of anatomical type, language, and culture seems to be so variable as to be unpredictable. The so-called "Aryan problem" is therefore nonexistent, for obviously people who speak an Aryan (Indo-European) language may be and often are of a large variety of anatomical types and cultures. What we call "race" embraces many language groups, as in both Europe and Africa. Contrary to what popular prejudice holds, in the past we do not find a few "mother tongues," but rather more languages than there are today, suggesting that our ancestors were many small isolated groups, each with its own body type, language, and culture. We can never know whether so-called primitive mentality causes a simple and

deficient culture, or whether such culture could adapt higher forms of life at any time the opportunities for development are presented.

Culture, in Boas' analysis, is the sum of the acts and reactions characteristic of the behavior of individuals within a group. In Boas' sense, animals could be said to have culture, though we generally call their acts habits, for certain animals have group behavior, a recognition of power and craft, a selection of some of their own to hunt and others to guard. Apes, it seems, can make and use tools in a limited way. Certain habits, such as the annual migration of birds, are the result of a long historical process, as in human culture.

Cultures everywhere are remarkably, even monotonously, alike. All men communicate through speech, build fires, and make tools. They all have some religious sense, believing in a supernatural or spirit life. Sometimes their beliefs and cultural acts are strikingly similar: for example, the simultaneous invention of zero in Yucatan and India, identical basket design and decoration in America and Africa, or the identical blowgun used in South America and Malaysia. Folklore and legends show even more parallels, with identical complex tales, with the same motifs, images, and plot patterns to be found all over the world. We cannot credit this similarity to cultural diffusion; we probably have here the common product of similar minds confronting similar situations in the world that is common to all of us. Cultural diffusion, however, is phenomenal; Indian corn was spread all over the world in a mere decade after it was brought to Europe from America in the sixteenth century. Before Europeans came to the New World, it seems the Indians of Mexico, Central America, and Peru played the role in this continent that the cultures of Central Asia did in the Old World.

We often assume that modern culture is complex and sophisticated, while primitive culture is plain and simple. This is

too distorting a reduction. The languages of primitive cultures are always much more complex in structure than modern language systems. Primitive music is always more complex in rhythm, though similar in harmonics and thematic elements. Many of the founders of modern anthropology—Edward Tylor, James G. Frazer, Herbert Spencer—were entirely too simplistic in their propensity for seeing all cultural history as a logical progression of higher forms out of lower. We should not then look upon primitives as savage children who finally grew up to be good Victorian Englishmen or German burghers. The children of Europe are comparable only to the adults of Europe, not to adults of Africa. Parenthetically, Freud too is wrong, in Boas' opinion, in analyzing primitive culture in terms of unconscious conflicts which he found in his cases in nineteenth century Europe. There are vestiges of primitive ritual and behavior in modern culture. This fact would lead too many of us to deduce that all cultures began at the same low level of primitivism and proceeded through parallel evolutionary stages to the current high level of civilization we find today. This is not true, however. There is no reason anthropology can find to hold that agricultural civilizations always grow out of herding cultures. Clearly the traits needed for both are quite different, and the former does not have to come from the latter. Habits and people can be quite different. There is some historical development in a single limited phase, but we can find no harmonious evolutionary scheme to explain the development of a whole culture.

Nor does the family evolve in the way some early authors maintained. There is no evidence that the patriarchy we find in higher civilizations evolved out of an earlier matriarchy. In primitive societies remaining about the edges of the earth, we have both patriarchy and matriarchy, quite independent of each other. Neither does symbolic primitive art precede realistic modern art; the reverse can often be true. Oddly, Boas observes wryly, when

comparing cultures we look for similarities, quite often distorting evidence to make parallels. But when we look at race, we invariably look for differences, then exaggerate distinctions of no importance.

Geography is an important influence upon culture, but does not create it. A tribe may live upon rich gold veins but never mine. Economic determinism is no more a key to culture than geography. Social structures influence economic structures, and vice versa, and biological factors are also involved in this dynamic relationship.

We call those people "primitive" whose life forms are simple and uniform. We call those cultures civilized which, for better or worse, like ourselves have mastered their environment through technology. Leisure and surpluses are needed for complex thought and technical development: such people as the Eskimo clearly exhaust all their potential in merely staying alive in a formidable environment. We differ from the primitive in our educational devices. The traditional material we hand on from generation to generation is much more highly organized, compressed, logical, and abstract than the material a primitive father gives his children.

Boas closes his study with a plea for racial understanding, in contrast with the prejudices of pseudo-experts in the United States and Europe who couple racial prejudice with nationalism for a new and poisonous ideology. Immigration to America will no more "mongrelize" the United States than it did Europe, where for centuries invaders poured out of Asia. The low quality of culture found in too many Negro areas of our nation is obviously caused by unequal opportunity and social injustice; there is no reason to doubt that, given facility, opportunity, and help, the Negro will rise in cultural status. We should judge individuals by ability and character and not by any prejudice toward a group, and we should treasure cultural variety, not strive to impose any one standard of culture or race on any nation, or on the world.

MR. BULLIVANT AND HIS LAMBS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892-)

First published: 1947

Time: Indefinitely between 1900 and 1914

Locale: An English mansion occupied by Horace Lamb, his relatives, children and servants

Principal characters:

HORACE LAMB, the middle-aged master of his household

MORTIMER LAMB, Horace's cousin and his wife's lover

BULLIVANT, the butler who is content to know and understand all

GEORGE, his almost "criminal" helper

MRS. SELDEN, the cook

CHARLOTTE LAMB, the wife Horace married for her money

EMILIA LAMB, Horace's and Mortimer's aunt

SARAH LAMB,

MARCUS LAMB,

JASPER LAMB,

TAMASIN LAMB, and

AVERY LAMB, the children of Horace and Charlotte

GIDEON DOUBLEDAY, their tutor

GERTRUDE DOUBLEDAY, his mother

MAGDALEN DOUBLEDAY, Gertrude's daughter

MISS BUCHANAN, the storekeeper in the village

The eleventh of Miss Compton-Burnett's novels shows her remarkable ability to dramatize fully the complicated relationships that arise in a family where master, servants, children, and relatives know nearly everything about one another and their accepted interconnections. *Mr. Bullivant and His Lambs*, published in England as *Manservant and Maidservant*, is at the same time the novel that represents best Miss Compton-Burnett's ability to create children, servants, and their masters involved melodramatically in a meaningful interpretation of life's inevitable queer turnings and the novel that shows first her modification of her earlier view that human nature rarely changes for the better. One cannot say, of course, that Miss Compton-Burnett ever denied man's ability to alter as well as edit himself. Still, it is true that the novels preceding *Mr. Bullivant and His Lambs* are most frequently an exploration in depth of the quantity of evil men can bear equably in themselves and others. All of them, from *Pastors and Masters*, published in 1925, through *Elders and Betters*, which appeared in 1944, apparently show characters in self-satisfied, self-

centered action in which they may conceal but not change their "good" or "bad" natures. As one of the characters in *A Family and a Fortune*, published in 1939, says, it is impossible to choose the pattern we follow and so, if we are wise, we must, like the author—and for a very unbiblical reason—judge not lest we be judged. Most of us have committed or wished to commit major sins; indeed, as *Elders and Betters* made evident with particular vividness, those who are without sin are condemned to a virtue that is too pallid to be admirable and too unavoidable to be admired.

Perhaps it was the extremity of her portrayal of "evil" in *Elders and Betters* that impelled Miss Compton-Burnett to show the possibility of change for an apparent better in *Mr. Bullivant and His Lambs*. Certainly, in her preoccupation with cold fact, she had not turned to it in her novels. But it is difficult to see how she could have gone further in the portrayal of the depths of unenlightened selfishness than she did in *Elders and Betters*. There, Anna Donne, from the first to the last page, is an unswerving egomaniac portrayed with devastating

vividness. She treats the servants like members of the family and the members of the family like servants. She never forgets that Nature is ruthless in tooth and claw or feels that anyone but herself will serve her own interest. Anna's one accidental act of kindness to dying Aunt Sukey does not prevent her from destroying her will that would keep Anna from an inheritance. With ruthless believability, she drives Sukey's sister to suicide, marries her son, even wins Aunt Sukey's rings as a token of her esteem without a faint sign of remorse. No one who has read *Elders and Betters* can be surprised by dictators or overcome the terrifying knowledge that they are a fact of nature.

In the beginning of *Mr. Bullivant and His Lambs*, Horace Lamb seems quite as horrifying as Anna. He tyrannizes through parsimony. An extra cutlet on the dinner table, a coal more than is needful for minimum comfort on the fire, and he is full of righteous indignation that encompasses his five children, his wife, his mother, and his servants. Only Bullivant, his butler, can accept his awfulness calmly because he is a factualist like Miss Compton-Burnett. He accepts even what he cannot account for, judges no one because he does not believe he or anyone else could bear to be judged. Horace Lamb does not love his children, who nevertheless maintain a precocious capacity to be witty in desperation, nor does he allow them a chance he can prevent to adjust to life normally (though somehow they do, like some citizens of

totalitarian states).

Because of his ubiquitous awfulness, his wife intends to run away with his cousin so that both she and the children can escape a situation that never shows any indication it will grow less unbearable. No one can blame her. But, and this is believable and worth praise too, when Horace learns that his wife is to leave him and understands why, he changes. The children get new clothes and are urged to eat what they will. The house is kept warm and there are no complaints about the coal it requires. Horace shows his affection so demonstratively that his children (always as delightfully candid and witty as any of Miss Compton-Burnett's characters here and elsewhere) become amusedly uncomfortable. He even forgives George, Bullivant's helper, for an unsuccessful plot on his life. That both characters and the reader come to love him almost—especially if they can see with Mr. Bullivant and Cook the pathetic phoniness his character imposes upon him while he is a tyrant and when he changes to a benevolent dictator—is one of the finest triumphs of Miss Compton-Burnett's art. It marks also the beginning of a new phase in her work, for, from *Mr. Bullivant and His Lambs* on through *A God and His Gifts*, published in 1963, Miss Compton-Burnett's vivid factualism presents plentifully the sensational capacity for "evil" that inheres in all her characters that matter, an ability to bear themselves without totally editing their true selves out of consciousness.

MONDAY CONVERSATIONS

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869)

First published: *Monday Conversations*, 1851-1862; *New Mondays*, 1863-1870; *First Mondays*, 1875

Just as Boileau was the model man of letters and literary critic of the French seventeenth century, so, in several ways, was Sainte-Beuve the model professional literary man of the nineteenth century in

France. However, Sainte-Beuve, though he was a doctrinaire Romantic in much of his early work, cannot be so thoroughly identified with Romanticism as can Boileau with French Classicism. But

Romanticism never took so firm and characteristic a hold in France as had Classicism, and it is probably accurate to say that Sainte-Beuve typifies the French literary world of the mid-nineteenth century. This view holds despite the fact that he is notorious for not being able to evaluate correctly many of his great contemporaries; Stendhal, Balzac, and Baudelaire were among the authors to whom Sainte-Beuve was blind. In this respect Sainte-Beuve was the opposite of Boileau, whose ability to identify the greatness of his contemporaries was remarkable. Sainte-Beuve's strength lay in seeing the excellence of the literature of the past, and he was among the first to detect that Ronsard, who had been ignored for two hundred years, was a major figure in the French literary tradition. In this respect, too, he was the opposite of Boileau whose snobbish Classicism made him blind to the excellence of much of the literature of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. This contrast between Boileau and Sainte-Beuve is instructive: it illustrates the strengths of Classicism and Romanticism and shows us that the "perfect" literary consciousness will combine the characteristics of both.

In the nineteenth century, literary criticism, like other intellectual activities, more and more abandoned the humanistic traditions of the Renaissance as it sought to model itself on that great child and successor of humanism, modern science. The philosophy behind this new attitude was Positivism. It was assumed by Positivists that mankind had passed through the theological way of thinking, to an abstract and metaphysical method of thought, typified by non-religious philosophic systems, to the ultimate way of thinking: the positive way, based on positive, objective science. All things, physical reality, society, man himself, and literature, if examined scientifically could be known and understood completely and truly.

Adopting this theory to his own particular talents and interests, Sainte-Beuve

developed a characteristic method of criticism which is seen at its best in his *Monday Conversations* (*Causeries du Lundi*), a series of essays published in three Paris newspapers on successive Mondays from 1851 until just after his death in 1870. (Actually, these essays fall into three separate groups: *Monday Conversations*, a second series called *New Mondays*, and a posthumously gathered series of earlier essays titled *First Mondays*.)

The basis of Sainte-Beuve's critical method was exhaustive analysis of the work in question. Thus, just as he rejected the classical criticism of the seventeenth century which had found its basis in the writings of Aristotle and Horace, he also rejected the newer school of eighteenth century impressionistic criticism (which had in fact blended with classical criticism) that had found its theoretical basis in that greatest of impressionistic critics, Longinus. For Sainte-Beuve the literary work was not to be judged and examined in terms of a set of criteria external to the work, but by reference to the work itself. To accomplish this end, however, Sainte-Beuve indulged himself in a technique which we no longer find enlightening. That is, he focused on the author in the belief that a study of the author and a study of the work were inseparable and, in fact, amounted to the same thing. As Sainte-Beuve said, he wanted "to examine and question the individual talent [as it was reflected in the work] in terms of its education, its culture, its life, and its genesis." His approach to an author was, in his words, "to lay siege" to him. He wanted to catch the author, as it were, in the very act of creation, and he wanted to reveal his every intellectual and moral facet. His goal, as he said, was to write a "natural history" of literary talents.

Using this method, Sainte-Beuve constructed literary portraits. Several of his series of critical essays actually bore the word "portrait" in their titles; and all of his criticism could have borne that title.

In this method we see the ultimate weakness of his work, great as it is. As the important French literary historian Gustave Lanson said, Sainte-Beuve made biography the basis of criticism so that, instead of explaining the work in biographical terms, he reconstructed a biography from the work itself. This observation is valid even for Sainte-Beuve's fine historical study of the Jansenist Abbey of Port-Royal, the intellectual nursery and school of Racine, Pascal, and many other important figures of the seventeenth century. In his multi-volume history of *Port-Royal*, which he published between 1840 and 1860, Sainte-Beuve wanted to treat the Abbey as a "unique individual of whom I am writing a biography."

This method of Sainte-Beuve was not a "system." That is, he did not approach a work with any one idea or set of criteria he was determined to use, or any one technique of analysis. He spent much effort in his earlier years trying to find a formula or school that would satisfy him and which would help him organize (that is, bias) his observations. But sooner or later he rejected all "isms"—consciously at least. That he was a child of his time, and that he reflected the Positivist intellectual assumptions of the era, goes without saying. Consciously, Sainte-Beuve was an enemy to all kinds of dogmatism and, his unfortunate critical judgments of some of his contemporaries notwithstanding, he showed himself able to deal sympathetically with all kinds of writing.

In his early years, for example, as a mediocre poet and novelist, and as a bud-

ding young and brilliant critic, he fell under the influence of Victor Hugo and then Chateaubriand. He was an avowed Romantic and frequently praised writers whom he judged were helping to rejuvenate and to rescue literature from the deadness of Classicism. He was one of the first Frenchmen to appreciate the fantasies of E.T.A. Hoffmann—who, Sainte-Beuve claimed, had opened unexplored areas of literary experience for future writers. As he grew older, however, particularly during the period when he was writing his *Monday Conversations*, he abandoned many of his former Romantic enthusiasms, and more and more came to value the clarity and simplicity and reasonableness of Classical writing. For this reason he was able to appreciate and reinterpret great Classicists like Molière and La Fontaine for a century that had begun by rejecting these masters.

But it is not what Sainte-Beuve said in his *Monday Conversations* and his other critical works that still attracts us; it is just as much how he says it. Each of his essays is a work of art in itself. In many ways, Sainte-Beuve is as fine a writer as any of those he examines. His style is characterized by exquisitely effective epigrams and metaphors; he charms his readers and reveals to them all the nuances and delicacy of his subtle mind. He translates into concrete terms and communicates to his audience his own pleasure with great works of literature and the intimacy with them and their authors that his method allows him to achieve. In this respect Sainte-Beuve may be characterized as an epicurean of literature.

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL AND CHARTRES

Type of work: An extended essay delving into architecture, history, and theology

Author: Henry Adams (1838-1918)

Locale: France

First published: 1904

On the surface, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, is the leisurely study of two great medieval buildings, one a Norman

abbey, the other a Gothic cathedral. In the author's mind, however, the book had a far wider purpose. It set out to evoke

the mood of a whole era in France, the eleventh to the thirteenth century, in all aspects: art, theology, philosophy, music. Behind this wider purpose was still another. Henry Adams subtitled the book "A Study of Thirteenth Century Unity," asking that it be read along with his autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*, in which he discussed what he called "twentieth century multiplicity."

Adams was a historian, and his two books suggest both a theory of history and an attitude toward history. Western civilization had moved from unity to multiplicity, from a God-centered culture in which faith was the major force to an uncentered culture of competing ideologies and conflicting scientific theories. Adams' attitude was one of quiet regret, and his survey of medieval France is informed by an intellectual's brand of poignant yearning.

This emotional longing for the good order of a medieval culture is more than balanced, however, by the rigorous intellection Adams exercises. Translations of old French lyrics, incisive summaries of Thomist theories, detailed analyses of architectural subtleties—these are among Adams' self-imposed duties in the book. Scholars agree that Adams fulfilled his duties with grace and considerable accuracy.

His method is deceptively casual. In the preface he announces the desired relationship between himself and the reader: an uncle is speaking to a niece, as guide for a summer's study tour of France. But immediately we see that the genial uncle has planned the course of study quite rigorously. It operates partly in the way that Adams' own mind tended to operate, by emphasizing opposites. Thus Adams concerns himself with contrasts: St. Michel and Chartres, the masculine temperament and the feminine, Norman culture and French culture. All this is within the major contrast of thirteenth century and twentieth. Adams also uses the device of paradox. He insists

that his purpose is not to teach. Yet the book is a joy only if the reader's intellect stands alert to follow Adam's careful exposition.

By 1904, when the book was privately printed, Adams had befriended several of the young American scholars who were awakening American universities to the importance of the medieval period. Adams himself had done sporadic writing and study in this realm years before. The book can be usefully thought of as an old man's legacy to a new generation, an unpretentious structure of affectionate scholarship, carefully built with some of Adams' finest prose.

Basically, the book contains three parts. The opening chapters deal with Mont-Saint-Michel on the Normandy coast. A transition chapter enables Adams to traverse the necessary route to the cathedral town of Chartres. Here six chapters examine the great cathedral itself, leading the reader to see its full symbolic meaning. The six concluding chapters then attend to history, poetry, theology, and philosophy—the medieval setting in which the jewel of the cathedral shines.

Adams' focus is medieval France, and here his book begins at the offshore sugarloaf mountain of St. Michel, where the great abbey was built between 1020 and 1135. Instantly the salient characteristics accumulate, for later contrast with those of Chartres: isolation, height, energy, modest size, utter simplicity, dedication to the archangel St. Michael (representing the Church Militant).

As Mont-Saint-Michel "was one of the most famous shrines of northern Europe," so in French song the *Chanson de Roland* (*Song of Roland*) achieved unequalled eminence. How song and shrine complement each other is Adams' theme in Chapter Two. Both represent the militant temper just before the Battle of Hastings; both exalt simplicity, directness, intensity, and both display a certain naïveté. This was France of the eleventh century.

Next it is the early thirteenth century

that draws his attention, "the early and perfect period of Gothic art." On the Mount this period is seen in the ruins of the ancillary buildings (the "Merveille"): great hall, refectory, library, cloisters. The tour of the Mount completed, Adams sums up the meaning of the entire complex, using his key word, "unity": "it expressed the unity of Church and State, God and Man, Peace and War, Life and Death, Good and Bad; it solved the whole problem of the universe."

The uncle goes now to Chartres. As the fenestration of St. Michel's great hall looked ahead to the glass of Chartres, so the choir and façades of Coutances, along the way, prepare us for Chartres, as do Bayeux, Mantes, and Saint-Germain-des-Prés. For Adams Chartres is the climactic shrine, the central symbol of its age and of his book.

We arrive at Chartres in Chapter Five, with a distant glimpse of the two spires. Adams, perhaps at his most genial, explores the façade, especially noting the contrast between the magnificent "old" tower of the twelve century and the "new" tower completed in 1517. This is a chapter of immense detail perfectly handled, detail which gradually rises into symbolism. For Chartres is the church of the Virgin, "the greatest of all queens, but the most womanly of women." It is her palace, the utter opposite of St. Michel: feminine, elaborate, gracious, a building larger and later than the abbey. Minute examination of the portals and porches concludes Chapter Five. Only now, anticipation sufficiently stimulated, does Adams permit entry.

But with a bit of the avuncular humor that accounts for the charm of the book, Adams insists on another chapter of delay—"ten minutes to accustom our eyes to the light." This is a ruse. The interior dimness here symbolizes the dim past that Adams' literary art seeks to evoke. This chapter characterizes the Queen of Heaven, who demanded in her church space, light, convenience, and color.

Now follow a full hundred pages that function on several levels. There is narrative, a progressive tour through the church; description, an examination in detail of windows, apses, chapels; evocation, of an era and its art and faith; symbolism, the meaning of the Lady to the architects and worshipers; the meaning of the iconography; the significance of the age itself. Adams here reaches the high point of his interest and his art, besides demonstrating considerable proficiency as a master of architectural detail.

Adams next, in his chapter on "The Three Queens," turns to one of his favorite doctrines. He has been posing as one of the Virgin's faithful, so that it is no surprise to see him declaring the doctrine of woman's superiority. The twelfth century held this view, insists Adams: Chartres was built for the Virgin. Secular women of the century held power also. These were Eleanor, Queen of France; Mary of Champagne; and Blanche, Queen of France. They created the institution of courtly ("courteous") love.

The subject of courtly love leads Adams on to a light-hearted discussion of thirteenth century song, chiefly a synopsis of *Auscassin et Nicolette*, Adam de la Halle's "Li Gieus de Robin et de Marion," and the famous *Roman de la Rose*. In his discussion of poetry and architecture Adams says that in this period "Art leads always to the woman."

Specifically, art leads to the Virgin. Adams now takes up the miracles of the Virgin. They make up a special branch of literature and demonstrate that the sympathetic Virgin "was by essence illogical, unreasonable and feminine"—a pitying "power above law." Here again is the contrast between the Virgin and St. Michael.

Abruptly turning from the "feel" of the Middle Ages, achieved through study of its art, Adams now attends to its mind. This subject is introduced by way of Abélard, theologian and dialectician at Notre Dame de Paris. Adams constructs an abstract debate between Abélard and his

teacher, William of Champeaux, to bring up the issue of unity versus multiplicity, which will concern him through the rest of the book. The problems of unity and multiplicity were several: How can God be One and yet be a Trinity? How can man in his diversity become one with God?

But for the moment the focus is on Abélard, the man who sought God by the force of pure reason. He, of course, is the direct opposite of the illogical Virgin and of the equally illogical mystic, Francis of Assisi, whom we meet also. Adams thus continues his method of displaying the age by means of its opposites.

Whether such opposites as scholasticism and mysticism could be reconciled is part of Adams' problem in the last chapter. The great reconciler was Thomas Aquinas, whose all-encompassing *Summa Theologiae* Adams elaborately compares to the detail and grandeur of the Gothic cathedral. Aquinas it was who showed how to fuse God's trinity with His unity.

Even more important, he showed how God, the One, permeates all being, creating the great multiplicity and diversity of man and the universe.

Now Adams sums up some of the paradoxes and polarities he has already dealt with. One unusual thing about the Church of the Middle Ages was its multiplicity: it harbored mystics and rationalists, the holy Virgin and the abject sinners she pitied. But even greater was its unity. Aquinas demonstrated how God and man, Creator and created, formed a grand unity that the age celebrated instinctively in art, architecture, and song. Here was the medieval world-view.

Adams' final point is comparison. The Thomist explanation of God's creativity can be compared usefully to a modern dynamo and its production of energy. The dynamo is the key symbol of *The Education of Henry Adams*, the sequel to *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*. The true subject of the autobiography is the century in which multiplicity won out.

MOTHER AND SON

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892-)

Time: Late Victorian period

Locale: England

First published: 1954

Principal characters:

MIRANDA HUME, a domestic tyrant

JULIUS HUME, her meek husband

ROSEBERRY HUME, her son

HESTER WOLSEY, Miranda's companion and the Hume housekeeper

EMMA GREATHEART, a middle-aged gentlewoman

MISS BURKE, her companion

To the initiated, Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels often appear to be parts of one continuous novel, cut like cloth from the same bolt of material and made into garments of old-fashioned but individual cut to clothe melodramatic situations turning upon motives of domestic tyranny, adultery, and revenge in her highly stylized fiction. Readers of *Mother and Son* will recognize at once the familiar country house of her setting and see fam-

ily resemblances between the people of this novel and the autocratic matrons, frustrated husbands, victimized older sons, precocious children, hired companions, servants, and villagers of her other books.

It is the same with the few stage properties that re-create her Victorian world with such economy of visual means. Like a thrifty housewife whose prized possessions are worn but still quite serviceable,

Miss Compton-Burnett has no idea of changing them for the sake of novelty or mere show.

We are quite prepared, therefore, to see themes, characters, and settings very similar to those Miss Compton-Burnett has used before. Also, the author is too well-bred to take offense if we comment on some of the furnishings. The fireplace before which the cat Plautus deposits a dead mouse has a familiar look, for example; in *Bullivant and the Lambs* it contained a dead jackdaw. The tea table in the drawing room and the dingy nursery-schoolroom are definite landmarks. We are not even surprised by the letter, hidden behind some broken wood in a desk, which brings to light the knowledge that Rosebery Hume is not the son of the man the world knows as his father. This device of revelation, or one quite similar, has played its part in almost every novel Ivy Compton-Burnett has written.

In her books Miss Compton-Burnett has created a world and a technique so unmistakably her own that some British critics have hailed her as the most original writer of fiction since Joyce. However, although her vogue continues to grow steadily, the facts about her fiction are not yet widely known on this side of the Atlantic. Invariably, her stories have a similar setting, a country house and a village in late-Victorian times. Domestic in outline, they are concerned only with family problems and relationships. This brief description may suggest Jane Austen's "such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in," or perhaps Trollope's Barchester tales; but Miss Compton-Burnett's effects are completely different. Instead of Trollopian romance, she offers the readers a full measure of wit and malice; instead of Jane Austen's pictures of family life, she presents a concept of fate as austere as that revealed by Greek dramatists. Able to extract the stuff of comedy from the drabest of realistic materials, she is as ruthless as Swift in uncovering man's stupidity and folly,

as stylized as Congreve in her comic sense, as imperturbable and devastating as Aeschylus in recording the working of fate in human affairs. She writes of the troubled human condition; and since that condition does not change, her domestic setting and its few landmarks are to her what the bare stage and an emotion were to the ancient Greeks.

Mother and Son follows a now familiar pattern in telling the story of the Hume and Greatheart households. For years Miranda Hume has bullied her family and servants into unwilling but complete submission, meanwhile lavishing her possessive mother love on Rosebery, her only son. Julius, her husband, has found an outlet for his own emotions in his affection for his brother's three orphaned children. Rosebery, middle-aged but immature, has developed into a preposterous hypocrite and weakling, too much under his mother's thumb ever to tell her that the tea she sweetens with generous lumps of sugar is no longer to his taste. In the nursery, the children, when they are not mocking "Cousin Rosebud," yearn to be freed from Miranda's petty tyrannies.

That time is soon at hand. Miranda, secretly ailing, hires a companion, Hester Wolsey, who formerly shared a cottage in the village with Emma Greatheart, and with the two households thus drawn together Rosebery is attracted to Miss Greatheart's new companion, Miss Burke. When the time comes for Miranda to inform her husband that she has not much longer to live, he causes her death by revealing that his supposed niece and nephews are his own by a former mistress. Before long this secret is counterbalanced by the discovery that Rosebery is not his son but Miranda's child by a secret lover. For a time it seems as if these revelations have freed both men from Miranda's tyranny forever. Both contemplate proposals of marriage, Julius to Emma Greatheart, Rosebery to Miss Burke. But Hester Wolsey has also learned the family secrets and is in a position to make indiscreet disclosures at an inopportune time.

In the end nothing has changed. Julius and Rosebery fail miserably in their desperate attempts to find freedom and happiness; they learn that they are as much under Miranda's dead hand as they were when she was alive.

All this is told by a method in which dialogue takes the place of devices which are the stock in trade of other novelists—exposition, scene, character drawing, story development. Miss Compton-Burnett's people come together and talk, and out of a closely knit pattern of conversation arises our knowledge of character and motive, of atmosphere and movement. This method would be tedious in the extreme if it were not for the writer's skill in suggesting more than she ever puts into words. Everything is kept at a

middle distance; we hear at one remove from the rhythms and tones of ordinary speech, and because understanding depends on close concentration we are able to distinguish the subtle variations which set off one character from another and to catch in individual accents underlying clues to meaning. This is the true secret of Ivy Compton-Burnett's technique. The talk of her characters is like intricate, delicate keys unlocking the human heart, speaking out in joy or sorrow, hope or despair. Life, as the writer sees it, is held in tremulous balance between bitter tragedy and high comedy. But always, whether her words are tragic or comic, the spoken word creates the reality of people and things within the province of her subtle art.

MOTHER HUBBERD'S TALE

Type of work: Poem

Author: Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599)

First published: 1591

Principal characters:

REYNOLD, the wily fox of French folk legends

THE APE, his accomplice

Although Edmund Spenser's first major published work, *The Shepheardes Calendar*, reveals his concern with corruption in both the church and the state, it hardly does more than suggest the gift for satire that he displays in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, the most medievalistic of his works. He borrows his verse form, rhymed iambic pentameter, from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and his apology for his plain language on the grounds that he is simply reproducing the words of an old woman, is reminiscent of Chaucer's excuse for the bawdy vocabulary of some of his characters. The central character of *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, the wily fox who attempts to defraud the public, comes from the popular French stories of Reynard the Fox, translated and published by England's first printer, William Caxton, in the late fifteenth century.

The poem falls into two distinct parts.

In the first section the fox and his companion, the ape, move through the world of men, swindling first the common people, then the clergy, and finally the nobility. The latter part of the poem is set entirely in the world of animals, as the two adventurers take over the throne of the lion, the traditional king of beasts.

Mother Hubberd's Tale begins with a prologue describing the August days that have brought sickness to the poet. His friends visit him and tell tales of knights, fairies, and giants to while away his days of illness. What pleases him most, however, is the beast fable recounted by old Mother Hubberd. Spenser has deliberately tried to reproduce the sententious quality of an old woman's storytelling; however, he occasionally slips out of his *persona*, especially when he is discussing the evils of the court.

Mother Hubberd's narrative opens as

the fox approaches his neighbor, the ape, and proposes that they set out together to seek their fortunes. The ape willingly acquiesces and wants only to know how his friend plans to improve their sorry lot. The fox suggests a disguise and points out that if they pretend to be beggars they will be free of all obligations and responsibilities. The two therefore dress themselves in the tattered remains of military uniforms to win confidence and sympathy; here Spenser points out an evil of his age, the plight of discharged veterans who were left to wander with no means of livelihood.

The comrades' first victim is an honest, unintelligent farmer who listens sympathetically to the ape's description of his misfortunes and his wounds. The ape requests employment—something that will not tax his poor battered body—and he is soon tending the guillible husbandman's sheep with the fox as his trusty dog. The partners in crime feast lavishly on their charges for several months, then escape into the night just before they are to produce an accounting of the flock.

Soon wearying of profitless begging, they provide themselves with a gown and a cassock to impersonate learned clergymen. Spenser's account of their progress in this guise is a scathing condemnation of clerical abuses of his age. They first encounter an illiterate priest who advises them on their parish duties. All that is necessary is to say the service weekly, to "lay the meat before" men; they have no responsibility for helping their parishioners accept the gospel. The old days when priests prayed daily and sincerely are, fortunately, past:

Now once a week, upon the Sabbath day,

It is enough to do our small devotion,
And then to follow any merry motion.

The priest then suggests that the fox and the ape go to some nobleman, feigning a grave and saintly demeanor, to request a benefice. He cannot recommend that they seek preferment at court, for "noth-

ing there is done without a fee."

Heeding this good counsel, the fox assumes the role of priest, and the ape becomes his parish clerk. They revel gaily for a time, but the complaints of their abused and exploited parishioners finally bring about their expulsion from their offices. Once more on the road, they almost starve before they meet a richly dressed mule who tells them that he has just come from the court. He, too, has advice for achieving success. They should appear at court themselves:

. . . with a good bold face,
And with big words, and with a stately
pace,
That men may thinke of you, in general,
That to be in you, which is not at all:
For not by that which is, the world now
deemeth,
(As it was wont) but by that same that
seemeth.

The description of the pair's exploits at court is the longest single section of the poem, and it was closest to Spenser's heart, for he had spent many months at court trying without success to win royal favor and patronage. The fox and the ape had better luck; they found themselves suited by nature and inclination to win acceptance. The ape dresses in outlandish clothes and demonstrates his accomplishments:

For he could play, and daunce, and
vault, and spring,
And all that else pertains to reveling.

He is also skilled at fortune-telling, juggling, and sleight of hand. The latter talent was especially profitable, for "what he touched came not to light again." Spenser contrasts his behavior with that of the true nobleman, who has many of the attributes of the ideal courtier of Castiglione. His primary allegiance is to his honor, to his personal integrity; he spends his days in riding, running, wrestling, preparing himself for military service, playing musical instruments and writing poetry. He tries hard to learn

enough about the affairs of state to be a wise counselor to his prince and endeavors in every way to achieve excellence.

The ape, on the other hand, passes his time gambling, carrying on intrigues, and composing exceedingly bad verses to corrupt the chaste ladies around him. To support his success, Reynold, disguised as his confidential servant practices all kinds of deceits and, for a large fee, promises favors from his master to poor suitors who come to court looking for preferment. Spenser's description of these suitors reflects his own unhappy experiences:

So pitiful a thing is suitors state.
Most miserable man, whom wicked fate
Hath brought to court . . .
Full little knowest thou that hast not
tried,
What hell it is, in suing long to bide:
To loose good dayes, that might be
better spent;
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed today, to be put back tomorrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with feare
and sorrow;
To have thy Princes grace, yet want
her Peer's.

At length the fox's deceptions are discovered, and he is banished. The ape, left without resources, soon finds himself shabby and scorned, and he flees to rejoin his friend. Lamenting their lack of success, they wander into a wood where they find the lion lying asleep, his crown and scepter beside him. The ape timorously steals the lion's skin and his regalia, then claims the throne for himself as a reward for his valor. The fox reluctantly agrees, stipulating that he be allowed to make all the decisions of government. They initiate a reign of terror, extorting treasure from all the beasts of the forest.

Spenser's description of the fox's serv-

ices as chief minister has been considered by many scholars to be a satirical portrait of Elizabeth's great Lord Treasurer, Lord Burleigh, whom the poet blamed for blocking his own preferment. The fox sells justice, raises the fortunes of his family by his ill-gotten gains, and defends his actions on the grounds of his long experience and his desire to build up the royal treasury. He brings about the downfall of the noblest beasts, scorns scholars and poets, and disdains the common people:

Let God, said he, "if please, care for
the many,
I for my self must care before else any."

Only divine intervention can put an end to this disastrous reign; Jupiter notices the turmoil among the wild animals and sends Mercury to humble the usurper ape. Mercury arouses the lion from his unnatural sleep, and the latter goes to the door of his palace, roaring with such force that most of its inhabitants perish from fear. The ape runs distracted to find a hiding place, and the fox skulks out to the lion, laying all the blame upon his partner. The lion punishes both, stripping the fox and casting him out, then clipping the ape's tail and ears; the story ends as a kind of myth of "why the ape has no tail."

Spenser has in this poem assimilated medieval techniques and the folk tradition brilliantly to produce a work that is still an interesting, amusing narrative and a powerful religious and political satire. He so successfully blends the worlds of men, beasts, and Olympian gods that there is no apparent incongruity. The major flaw in the progression of the narrative is probably the personal feeling which overshadows the story in the episode at court, but this adds to the poem's interest for the modern reader.

A MOVEABLE FEAST

Type of work: Autobiographical reminiscences

Author: Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Time: 1921-1926

Locale: Paris

First published: 1964

Principal personages:

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

HADLEY HEMINGWAY, his first wife

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

ZELDA FITZGERALD

JAMES JOYCE

SYLVIA BEACH, the proprietress of Shakespeare and Company, a famous Paris bookshop

EZRA POUND

GERTRUDE STEIN

ERNEST WALSH, a poet

EVAN SHIPMAN, a poet

PASCIN, a French painter

WYNDHAM LEWIS

RALPH CHEEVER DUNNING, an opium-smoking poet

FORD MADOX FORD

From Ernest Hemingway we have perhaps learned more about the violent realities lurking beneath all experience than from any other writer of our time. His aim from the very beginning was to represent those realities as precisely as he could, never minimizing their destructive potential. Life, he told us early in his career, was uncompromising. It punished the fine and the foul impartially, taking its own grim time, choosing its own grim methods. The bleak and simple wisdom is given form in the retreat from Caporetto, the wound of Jake Barnes, the wreckage of the old man's great fish.

In his attempts to render, and thus confront, the desolating fact, Hemingway was himself uncompromising. He developed a subdued and stoic prose which betokened what he thought the only meaningful response to that inevitable ruin which time would visit upon each of us. Through the exercise of control one could confer grace and dignity upon defeat; though time would destroy, it need not humiliate. Even his symbols reflected this tight dialectic, compressing it into local realities that imaged forth the eternal shape of the contest, as in his picture of the bullfight. In the rituals of the arena the bull would always die, and ultimately the man too. But the animal would go down charging, and the man at

his best perform a ceremony of courage, delicacy, and precision. Though neither would survive, neither would retreat from the confrontation with death.

In *A Moveable Feast*, written in the last years of Hemingway's life and published after his death, there is in one respect a disquieting relaxation of that old standard. Though much of the prose is as fine as ever, Hemingway, in remembering his early years in Paris, does nervous battle for first place among his writing contemporaries, those legendary beings who have taken on for us an almost mythic dimension with the passage of time. Pound, Joyce, Ford Madox Ford, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald—we have come to see them as we do figures in a novel, endlessly alive on the streets along the Seine, in Gertrude Stein's apartment, at the sidewalk cafés, in the warm and cluttered interior of Sylvia Beach's famous bookshop. But in this book these figures out of the past are seriously reduced, not by distortion of facts but by skillfull placing of reductive emphases. It is as though Hemingway, before entering the ring, had drugged his bull.

The writing, however, is so compelling that one must make a special effort to remember that this is not an objective account of that literary generation which has provoked as much interest in itself as

in the works it produced. As historical document the book does add to our knowledge, sometimes striking a comic note into the sad music we have come to expect. (Gertrude Stein's famous remark turns out to have originated with an angry garage manager tongue-lashing an attendant who was too slow in repairing Miss Stein's Model T Ford: "You are all a *generation perdue*.") But too often there is something distinctly graceless about Hemingway's selection of detail. A most delicate confidence entrusted to him by Scott Fitzgerald is exposed so casually that one can only conclude Hemingway's intention was to enlarge his own stature by reducing his friend's. Shaken by Zelda's assertion that he was built too small to satisfy a woman, Fitzgerald had brought himself, with great difficulty, to ask Hemingway's opinion. After a quick inspection in the men's room of a restaurant, Hemingway assured him that he was all right and went on to provide some typical locker-room information on technique. Fitzgerald, of course, remained doubtful. Though this may be precisely the way it all happened, the incident is tilted to a favorable angle for Hemingway. He is clearly hero, father, authority, potency-figure, a man of dimension. There is even a hinting to the reader, in that extended advice, that Zelda was not entirely wrong, that Hemingway was simply being a good, sympathetic, and protective friend. The passage undercuts itself, gives itself away. It is not what it proclaims.

An equally private detail from the life of Gertrude Stein is handled in the same callous manner. And in the treatment of other famous friends, Hemingway is similarly self-congratulatory. Many of the sketches seem designed exclusively to deflate the competition. Seldom is a man valued for his achievements; the most complex of men are treated as though they were equal merely to the worst (sometimes the best) of their traits. Ford Madox Ford is seen as a man one must avoid looking at, in whose presence one

holds his breath, a man whose arrival at the ever-present outdoor café could actually foul one's drink. There is also Wyndham Lewis, unbearably supercilious, gratuitously unkind, the nastiest looking man Hemingway had ever seen, with the eyes of a failed rapist. Sometimes the competition is shown to be downright unsavory, sometimes obtuse, sometimes merely ineffectual (perhaps the unkindest cut of all). There is cynicism in much of this, failure of tact. There is frequently a smell of contrivance.

It must be said, however, that James Joyce is treated with kindness, though he is hardly present in the book. Ezra Pound is depicted as a sort of saint, a man given to helping other writers by raising money, dispensing advice, and even to admiring the works of friends simply because they were friends; loyalty and generosity are his main traits. There is warmth, too, in the general treatment of Fitzgerald, though he comes off as somewhat absurd, and in the account of Hemingway's friendship with Gertrude Stein, he helping her proof her works, she serving him fine liqueurs, entertaining, encouraging, criticizing. But there is a sense throughout that the potency of his friends is limited, that Hemingway's is not.

Probably the least attractive aspects of this book will draw the widest attention in time to come. The discerning reader will hope otherwise, for beneath the sketches runs another story, dreamlike and compelling: Hemingway's idyllic remembrance of the time with his first wife in their small apartment over a sawmill on the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. This undercurrent is a literature of nostalgia, a beautiful story of crisp winter walks, fire-heated rooms, tender conversation. This quiet world, surely more perfect in recorded memory than in lived reality, is kept apart from the other, that land of tension, celebrity, desecration. Like Huck Finn's river, the apartment over the sawmill is a place of renewal, a sanctified region beyond the touch of

ugliness. Hadley is always both lover and mother, their Paris a garden and playground. This is myth, not history. Though built on fact, the tale is transformed by selection and emphasis into a dream of perpetual childhood. In this world, hunger is not pain but a sharpening of the perceptions, an internal signal of one's youth. Poverty is in itself a condition of grace.

Despite moments of embarrassingly adolescent talk between Hadley and Hemingway, despite a strange shifting of guilt when the dream is finally betrayed by Hemingway (it is the rich who are responsible), the quiet, lyric power of the romance is irresistible. Even the scraps of wisdom, stripped down, fragmentary, always too simple, seem impressive and

right in their context. On the sense of loss, for instance: all things, good or bad, evoked it after they were gone. But the loss of the bad resolved itself; one forgot. The loss of the good made demands, required the reconstruction of one's life. It is not the idea here that moves us but the world it implies, a simplified, manageable world in which good and bad are different, are distinguishable, are capable of manifesting their qualities even in their absence.

In Hemingway's prose this is the world of the clean, well-lighted legend from which we can look out upon reality, knowing that it will finally destroy what we have, but knowing too that we have it.

THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS

Type of work: Philosophical essay

Author: Albert Camus (1913-1960)

First published: 1942

Regarded as one of the foremost thinkers and writers of modern France, Albert Camus reached maturity at a time when Hitler came to power; in his writings he expressed both the horror of living during Hitler's rise and World War II, and the desire to establish a meaningful life in a meaningless world of war and futile conquest. Not content with the nihilism of his age and unable to ignore the catastrophe of modern life, Camus developed two related concepts, the absurd and revolt, into a significant philosophy of personal life. The concept of revolt he was to examine at length in *L'Homme révolté* (*The Rebel*), but in *The Myth of Sisyphus* he presented the concept of the absurd and thus outlined the belief that man has worth but lives in a world that denies such worth. The absurd is the clash between the order that the human mind strives for and the lack of order that man finds in the world that surrounds him.

Camus begins *The Myth of Sisyphus*

by categorically stating that the one truly serious problem of philosophy is suicide, because suicide is the confession that life is not worth living. Why, he asks, do people not commit suicide? From this springboard he goes on to describe the absurdity of existence. Men are not logical in the act of killing themselves, but they do believe in the absurdity of their lives. The absurd, Camus explains, forces itself upon a man when he desires to find absolutes by which to guide his life; he searches for absolutes but finds that the world is not reasonable. Once he realizes that existence is absurd, he has two solutions: suicide or recovery. In short, his experiences forces upon him the necessity of choosing between suicide and life in absurdity. If he chooses life, then he must accept the absurd. This absurd is neither in the man nor in the world but is the bond uniting them; therefore, physical suicide does not answer it—such an act merely destroys one of the terms.

Having stated this thesis, Camus then

considers the alternatives to physical suicide. Philosophical suicide, the existential "leap of faith," is an anti-rational acceptance of the limits of reason in which these limitations are an excuse to transcend to God. Camus calls this attitude an escape; the absurd does not lead to God but only to itself. Hence, to speak of a "leap of faith" is like advocating physical suicide since both are escapes and, therefore, seek to contradict or negate the absurdity of existence. Physical suicide attempts to have value or meaning in a meaningless existence; the existential "leap" tries to evade the condition of life. By rejecting both physical and philosophical suicide, Camus pushes himself to the final alternative: the absurd man must fully confront the truth of his existence and accept it. Continually tempted either to kill himself or to make a "leap," he must live only with the certainty that nothing is certain except the absurd, and he must find whether it is possible to live *without appeal*. Such a man is indifferent to the future but wants to live the *Now* to its fullest; he is interested not in the best life but in the most living, realizing that the condition of life is hopelessly contradictory.

In the second part of this slender volume, Camus treats the ethical implications of life in the absurd. Having chosen absurdity, how does a man act positively while he is consciously aware of the negative character of his choice? Although all systems of morality are based on the idea that every action has consequences, the absurd man, who recognizes the unpredictable and unreasonable condition of life, cannot judge an act by its consequences. Instead, he sees action as an end in itself—the value of life being measured by its sterility, indifference, and hopelessness. Don Juan, for example, goes from one affair to another, not because he searches for total love but merely because he needs the repetition. Yet Don Juan is not melancholy; he knows his condition of life—seducing—and does not hope (the desire to have life

other than it is). Because he can live in neither the past nor the future, he lives entirely in the *Now*: he fully realizes that there is no such thing as eternal love, so he has chosen to be nothing. If he was punished as Christians say, it was because he achieved knowledge without illusion. Like Don Juan, the actor is an absurd man, because he applies himself wholeheartedly to being nothing—a mask that lives only three or so hours. He seeks the sterile life which accepts the absurd as its basic condition. Finally, Camus describes the conqueror, the third example of the absurd man. Conquerors live completely within time; they are the rebels who shall never succeed, for revolution is always against God and no man can be victorious. Still the conqueror fights on, knowing that conquest is futile. These examples—the seducer, the actor and the conqueror—represent the extremes of absurd action. The ordinary man, who knows but hides from nothing and who squarely faces life without hope, represents the typical absurd man, but it is the creator who is the most absurd character of all.

Each type of absurd man puts his entire effort into a struggle that he knows is defeated from the beginning, but the creator is the man who attempts to examine and to enrich the world that is ephemeral and meaningless. Art is the death and propagation of experience, the absurdly passionate repetition of monotonous themes; it is not escape from existence but the portrayal of the blind path of all men. Because the artist and his art "interlock," the work of art illustrates the mind's repudiation of itself, the desire of the mind to cover nothing with the appearance of something. Thinking is creating a world of images; the novelist who is philosophical creates the full complexity and paradox of life. Dostoevski, for example, was not interested in arguing philosophical problems but in illustrating the implications of such speculation: Kirilov kills himself in order to become god because he does not believe in god; thus, his act is completely absurd. In fact,

Dostoevski's novels are filled with absurd judgments, the greatest of which is that existence is illusory *and* eternal. The absurd novelist, then, negates and magnifies at the same time; he does not preach a thesis but describes the contradictions of life. The absurd novel has no depth beyond human suffering. Thus the creator passionately describes the fleeting, trying to capture the ephemeral that cannot be captured; he, too, is doomed to sterile failure from the beginning.

The closing section of the volume gives the book its title. In the classical myth of Sisyphus' punishment, Camus finds the absurd hero. Regardless of what he did in life, Sisyphus is condemned to an eternity of futile and hopeless work. He rolls a huge stone up a mountain, a struggle that takes superhuman strength, but the moment that the stone reaches the top, he steps aside and watches it roll

back to the valley. He knows that his strength and effort are hopeless, yet he silences the gods by his determination to do the hopeless. Actually Sisyphus' consciousness of his torment and its hopelessness makes him superior to it—his very act is a revolt because his consciousness makes him happy and happiness negates punishment.

Not until *The Rebel* did Camus analyze the nature and implications of this revolt from the absurd; however, in his lucid, often lyrical *The Myth of Sisyphus* he clearly describes the condition of life that he found in himself and his contemporaries condemned to live in Hitler's Europe. The result of this description, the concept of the absurd, formed the basis for his own works and became one of the fundamental essays in modern French philosophy and letters.

THE NEW CRITICISM

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: John Crowe Ransom (1888-)

First published: 1941

This book, an important landmark in twentieth century critical theory, reviews the thinking of I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, and Yvor Winters. As Ransom notes, the New Criticism begins with these men, is indeed indistinguishable from them.

He singles out I. A. Richards as the originator of the new way of looking at language, a way dependent on psychology and semantics rather than on taste or feeling. The aspects of Richards' theories that are singled out are Tone, Intention, and Dramatic Situation. The first of these, according to Ransom, is a form of particularization. It represents some particular speaker and indicates who his auditor might be. A poem's tone, then, is a quality of its characters, their situation, and their language. The intention of a poem, Ransom suggests, is equivalent to what might be called its logical thesis. In-

tentions may not always be clearly stated, nor is it desirable that this be the case. Ransom believes that Richards is not always clear on this aspect of his theory, but he adds that intention is what the critic sees as the meaning of the play. An example might be the reaction of a Freudian to *Hamlet*, compared with that of a spiritualist or a medieval historian. The psychologist might see the intention of the play as a statement of incestuous love; the spiritualist might read it as a statement of faith in the supernatural; the historian might see it as a reflection of Elizabethan monarchical policies.

Ransom then covers the important categories of Irony and Ambiguity. In covering the latter he notes that the work of Richards is to be understood as continued in that of his pupil, William Empson. The latter has been extraordinarily intelligent in tracing the multiple meanings

inherent in poetic language. In a judicious review Ransom surveys the kinds of ambiguity that Mr. Empson has discovered in poetry, its characteristics, and the place ambiguity has in the totality of a poem. He is on the whole much in favor of Empson's methods, but he notes, as most critics since have noted, that intricacy and allusiveness may often be sought where they do not exist and praised for qualities they do not objectively possess.

The next critic treated is T. S. Eliot, who is used as the example par excellence of the historical critic. Ransom begins by writing that Eliot is highly conscious of the past, and that he uses his sense of the past for the sake of literary understanding. It is Eliot's method to examine poets by contrast; to see how poets of different times will have interests characteristic of themselves and of their intellectual climates. Each man of letters, according to T. S. Eliot, is a product of what he believes and what he was born to. The force of tradition, Ransom suggests, is especially evident in Eliot's *Selected Essays* of 1932. It is Eliot's purpose in this book to anchor poetry to its past; to discourage a complete break with either the forms or the beliefs of the past.

When Ransom deals with some specific statements of Eliot's criticism, he comments that it is a kind of process of reevaluation. Ben Jonson is, for example, the kind of poet whose work is not often admired by an audience brought up on nineteenth century lyric poetry. Yet, as Eliot points out in his essay on Jonson, there are passages in which the qualities of feeling and thought easily equal the more blatant and possibly cruder poetry of his successors. In addition, one sees operating in Jonson a kind of wit that is no longer available to us. Eliot, then, is not only a first-rate practitioner of modern poetry, but a man pre-eminently concerned with the rediscovery of his poetic tradition, and with its emulation.

Ransom then takes up Eliot's famous description of the Metaphysical poets and

both supports and criticizes it. He acknowledges that certain metaphysical poems, like John Donne's "Valediction," have a kind of unique status and power. The compass imagery of this poem, which, since the work of Eliot and Cleanth Brooks has become part of the baggage of literary criticism, is acknowledged to have very strong powers of definition. Yet, unlike Eliot and Brooks, Mr. Ransom believes that such imagery is not self-justifying. He states that imagery and conceit are only elements of a poem, layers of its texture. The danger of such long and intricately developed patterns of language is that texture dominates the body of the poem and threatens its fullest meanings: it offers a part when we should be seeing the whole. In addition, he shows that the poetry of conceit becomes too particularized and therefore too restricted in its communication.

When Ransom takes up the central matters of Eliot's criticism and religion, he points out that Eliot insists upon religious belief. He is our most important religious poet as well as our first important modern historical poet. He adds that Eliot is particularly a Christian writer, one grounded deeply in the Anglican tradition. Ransom is particularly illuminating when he follows a controversy between Eliot and more secular thinkers. In this argument with the followers of Irving Babbitt, Eliot expressed distrust of what he called the positivistic tendencies of Humanism. His criticism is grounded not on the rational content of Humanism but on its capacities for intuitive belief. On this issue Ransom disagrees strongly, and he rebukes Eliot for being too distrustful of the ways of modern secular thought.

The third of the interpretations is centered on Yvor Winters, whom Ransom calls the critic best at interpreting the structure of a poem. Winters is strongest, and perhaps most restricted, by virtue of his commitment to ethical poetry. Indeed, Ransom indicates, any other aspect of poetry seems to Winters

to be negligible. Yet Winters is not guilty of external and commonplace moralism; he is not a modern Bowdler to whom the moral is worth more than the poem. This thesis is borne out by Ransom's study of "The Morality of Poetry" an essay central to the development of Yvor Winters. In this essay Winters claims that the intention of a poem is not really known to the poet when he addresses himself to the act of writing. It is the total meaning of the finished poem, which is expressed by the fact that it has attachments to local and particular things, that transcends the simple intention of writing it. For Winters the force of a poem consists in its author's attempt to come to terms with an experience and to order thereby a meaning for his own consciousness.

Ransom adds that Winters is at his best when he grapples with particulars; unlike Hart Crane or Yeats he does not evade moral issues by escaping from this world and celebrating the powers of a less defined and natural realm. In sum, then, he is to be valued insofar as he has a grasp of actuality and of the moral alternatives it offers.

The concluding section of *The New Criticism* is titled "Wanted: An Ontological Critic." In this part of the book Ransom argues that the best mode of critical attack on poetry is to differentiate the poem from other modes of discourse. Poetry, he states, is really revolutionary in that it departs from the conventions of

ordinary communication. Ordinary scientific discourse deals with only single values at a time, yet in a literary structure like *Hamlet* we may be dealing with particulars that do not have fully finite definitions. For example, each time that *Hamlet* appears—or perhaps each time we interpret a varying action of his—he appears to be quite different from our last experience of him. Art, in other words, deals with qualities that are not consistent in the scientific sense.

The New Criticism concludes with a consideration of how art is different from the ordinary modes of life and how poetry differs from scientific expression. Ransom points out that in certain poems (he uses Andrew Marvell's "Coy Mistress") the poet is not really concerned with a logical and predictable chain of statements but with a kind of irrelevance that seems either necessary or desirable. The principle of poetry, then, is connected not with statement but with imagination; when Marvell adds to a love poem his complex allusions to the conversion of the Jews or the chronology of the world, what he is doing is developing the particularity without which the body of the poem would remain abstract and theoretical. As far as Ransom is concerned, the texture of the poem is not really separable from its statement. *The New Criticism* ends by asserting this fact through demonstration.

NIGHT RIDER

Type of work: Novel
 Author: Robert Penn Warren (1905-)
 Time: 1904-1905
 Locale: Kentucky
 First published: 1939

Principal characters:

PERCY MUNN, a young Kentucky lawyer and farmer
 MAY MUNN, his wife
 MR. CHRISTIAN, Percy's neighbor and friend
 LUCILLE CHRISTIAN, his daughter
 SENATOR TOLLIVER, a leader in local affairs
 CAPTAIN TODD, a Civil War veteran
 BENTON TODD, his son

PROFESSOR BALL, and
DR. MACDONALD, leaders in the association
CORDELIA MACDONALD, his wife, and the daughter of Professor Ball
BUNK TREVELYAN, a poor tobacco farmer

Among the dominant themes in the novels of Robert Penn Warren are the search for self-identity, the isolation of the individual in society, and the opposition of violence and order in the development of modern America. All three themes appear in Warren's first published novel, *Night Rider*.

The principal action of *Night Rider* is based on events which occurred in Kentucky between the years 1905 and 1908. The growers of dark tobacco in Kentucky and Tennessee formed a protective association to combat the tobacco companies and try to force them to pay higher prices for tobacco. When the companies countered by small increases offered to all who would sell to them, some planters turned to violent action executed by bands of "night riders." This included the destruction of the plant beds of those who refused to join the fight against the companies, and finally led to the dynamiting of company warehouses in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The action of the lawless bands was finally stopped by the sending of troops into the area.

Though most of the events in *Night Rider* are related to the tobacco planters' battle against the companies and the farmers who refused to join or cooperate with the protective association, the book is not, as Warren warns the reader in a prefatory note, a "historical novel." The tobacco war provides the framework for the story of a young lawyer, Percy Munn, and his degeneration from a man of principle to a man of violence. It is a story of self-realization which comes too late to a man who, though intelligent, lacks the will or moral strength or clarity of vision to make the right decisions when faced by crises in his life. From one wrong action he seems to move half-somnambulistically, inevitably to the next, troubled and brooding yet unable to stop

the movement toward his certain doom.

In the summer of 1904, Mr. Munn (as the author calls him throughout the novel) attends a rally of the Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco in Bardsville, Kentucky. After an impromptu speech pleading for the defense of an "idea," he joins the association's board of directors, having been impressed by the leadership of such men as the smooth-talking Senator Tolliver and Captain Todd, a courageous ex-Confederate officer. But he has small success in gaining support for the association.

Curtailling his association activities in order to defend Bunk Trevelyan, accused of murdering a neighbor, Mr. Munn commits the first of a series of lawless deeds in which he convinces himself that an end justifies the means to attain it. Trusting Bunk's protestations of innocence, Munn leads an illegal search of Negro homes to find a knife like one belonging to Bunk which was found at the murder scene. When one is found and the Negro owner tells an unlikely story of how he got it, Bunk is released and the Negro dies for the crime.

Two raises in prices paid by the companies and an association decision to continue holding out, bring a public denunciation of the association by Tolliver and a suit to recover his crop. Bitter over Tolliver's betrayal, Munn joins an activist organization, the secret, Ku Klux Klan-like Free Farmers' Brotherhood of Protection and Control, whose night rider bands scrape the tobacco beds of farmers who refuse to join the association. Captain Todd, the man of both courage and probity, disapproves of the new group within the old, and withdraws from the association. Munn inwardly defends his own action because he believes the night rider raids will finally bring "justice" to the farmers. He learns, though, that lawless-

ness begets lawlessness: Bunk Trevelyan attempts to blackmail a Brotherhood member, and Munn becomes by lot the leader of a group who shoot Bunk after he refuses Munn's offer to let him run away. Again Munn defends his deed: Bunk *was* the killer, he tells himself, of the man for whose death an innocent Negro died; thus Bunk deserved death.

Yet Munn is nauseated at the part he has played and, returning home, he ravishes his wife May, as if to blot out one violent deed with another. Deserted by May as a result, he soon begins a loveless liaison with Lucille Christian, at whose father's home he frequently spends his nights.

Since the companies are still buying tobacco at the prices they set, the Brotherhood members dynamite the company warehouses in Bardstown. Pursuit of the raiders leads to the death of young Benton Todd whose body Mr. Munn delivers to Captain Todd. Troops move into the area the next day to restore order. But new violence develops outside the Brotherhood, with the burning of the homes of planters who use Negro laborers instead of whites. Senator Tolliver's home is burned, and then Mr. Munn's. Munn is roused from bed by Mr. Christian with news of the burning. After Munn's departure, Christian finds Lucille hiding in Munn's room and suffers a stroke which leaves him speechless.

Now homeless and rejected by both his wife and Lucille, Munn moves into the Ball home where, not long afterward, he witnesses the arrest of Dr. MacDonald on a charge of arson. At MacDonald's trial only Al Turpin, an ex-association member, is in a position to identify MacDonald. When Turpin is killed by a shot fired from Munn's rifle through his law office window, Munn must flee. He later divines that Ball killed Turpin to win an acquittal for MacDonald.

Hiding out at the farm home of Willie Proudfit, one of MacDonald's friends, Munn is visited by Lucille with news of her father's death and the suggestion that

flight and marriage will solve their problems. Learning of advances that Senator Tolliver had made to Lucille, however, Munn rejects her offer and determines instead to kill Tolliver whom he obsessively identifies as the source of the downfall of both the association and himself. For this Tolliver must die. But when he confronts Tolliver he cannot shoot and, learning that troops, informed by a relative of Proudfit's, are coming to arrest him, he flees and is shot down in the dark.

Though *Night Rider* is a novel with extensive action and a large cast of characters, Warren has unified it by using Percy Munn as what Henry James called a "central consciousness." People and events are seen primarily through one mind, and introspective Percy Munn seeks cause, meaning, and value in what is done by himself and others. Munn's ambivalence is seen in his alternate revulsion from people and his desire to be a part of a group or to wield power over them. This appears in the opening scene when Mr. Munn resents the crowd on the train and then experiences a moment of near exaltation when he imagines himself being greeted by the even larger crowd at the station. Throughout the novel he examines his own paradoxes and confusions, his basic coldness opposed to momentary heated involvement in talk and action, and his sense of isolation not only when alone but even with others.

Stylistically, *Night Rider* is marked by recurrent imagery of light and dark. As in the fiction of Hawthorne, Conrad, and others, this opposition is symbolic. The story opens in brilliant sunshine and ends in the dark. Munn's acts which show his progress from light into darkness all occur in the dark: the illegal search of Negro homes, the initiation into the Brotherhood, the night raids, the killing of Bunk, the sexual assault on May, the lust with Lucille, the dynamiting of the warehouses, the death of Benton Todd (the result of Munn's error in judgment), the final confrontation with Tol-

liver, and Munn's death. The opposed light and dark are sometimes shown as mirroring each other as if one contained the other; and Munn's divided self is symbolically portrayed as when he reads the morning news account of a raid he participated in, and finds it difficult to see himself as a part of it. Such symbolic imagery serves, like the strong focus on

Munn's point of view, to unify *Night Rider* and emphasize Warren's intent of writing a novel of moral as well as physical violence, of ethical more than historical significance.

Night Rider is an important first novel which introduces the themes, style, and structure that Warren was to employ in his later work.

NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Kenneth Roberts (1885-1957)

Time: 1759-1768

Locale: The United States and England

First published: 1937

Principal characters:

LANGDON TOWNE, a young artist, narrator of the story

ROBERT ROGERS, an adventurer, the leader of Rogers' Rangers and a searcher for the Northwest Passage

JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, an American artist

ELIZABETH BROWNE, Langdon Towne's youthful love, later Rogers' wife

NATTY POTTER, Rogers' secretary

ANN POTTER, Natty's daughter, later Langdon Towne's wife

SERGEANT MCNOTT, a devoted follower of Rogers

GENERAL AMHERST, of the British army

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON, superintendent of all Indians north of the Ohio,

SIR CHARLES TOWNSEND, English statesman

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, British artist

WILLIAM HOGARTH, British artist

HUNK MARRINER and

CAP HUFF, Langdon Towne's Portsmouth friends

Northwest Passage is considered by many to be the best of Kenneth Roberts' historical novels. Certainly, it has scope, painting as it does a mural of the surging of the shorebound colonies to push westward toward the Pacific Ocean in the mid-eighteenth century. All of the aspects of the story are here: the opportunists who saw in the vast country stretching to the west the chance to attain wealth and power, the dreamers who went exploring as a mountain climber climbs a mountain, because it was there; the old warriors, unable to find a place in the tamed colonies along the coast, who had to go west to continue the only life they knew; and the curious who had to go west so that they could bring back the

pictures and the descriptions and the maps for the mystification of those who remained to farm and run the shops and factories.

Roberts has attempted to escape the embarrassed self-consciousness of the ordinary historical novel, which has to present characters who are legends as far as the reader is concerned, in simple everyday situations. His device is to get around the problem of the hackneyed scene by not focusing on the subject of the novel at all. The novel is about the career of Robert Rogers, the leader of the famed Rogers' Rangers and the seeker of the Northwest Passage. The plot begins with Rogers' expedition to destroy the settlement of St. Francis, from which the

French-sponsored Indians had time and time again swooped down on the settlements of New England, and it ends after Rogers is a broken man, with all his dreams turned to dust. But the focus of the novel is on the career of the narrator, Langdon Towne, who first joins Rogers on the St. Francis expedition and whose career constantly crosses that of Rogers thereafter.

There are, essentially, four steps in the development of the novel: the introduction of Langdon Towne, the expedition to St. Francis, the mounting and failure of the expedition to find the Northwest Passage, and the disintegration of Robert Rogers. But this development is paralleled by the story of Langdon Towne, first as a promising young artist, then as a successful maturing artist. Whatever unity the novel has as a work of art is derived through the development of the character of Langdon Towne.

Perhaps the greatest boon gained from focusing the novel on Towne is that Roberts is thereby able to present a more balanced picture of Rogers, a man glorified in school-boy histories, yet a man who was both opportunist and adventurer, a man who was constantly in debt, yet a man who could acquire and use the respect and support of many of the most respectable citizens in the old and in the new worlds. The dichotomies of Robert Rogers are reflected in his relationship with Langdon Towne.

When Langdon Towne first meets Rogers, the young man is running from the persecutions of an unscrupulous King's Attorney. Rogers is taken with the idea of having an artist to record the beauties of the country that he wishes to promote as a source of wealth and land for expansion, and Towne is caught up by Rogers' dreams and by the vitality that is a mark of the man. Towne's devotion to Rogers is increased by the experience of the expedition to St. Francis. Although the expedition is successful in the sense that the military objective is obtained, Rogers, Towne, and a few others

make their way back to civilization only through the determination and resourcefulness of the leader.

Towne's faith in Rogers is not really shaken until his hero steals Elizabeth Browne, the girl with whom the young artist has long been in love. When Elizabeth and Rogers are married, Towne leaves for England, hoping to forget them both. Their paths do not cross again until Rogers himself comes to England to publicize his exploits and seek support for his attempt to find the Northwest Passage. Here Towne finds much to be desired in Rogers' attitude toward the wife he has left in America. Although Langdon Towne eventually discovers that he has had the best of the bargain as far as Elizabeth Browne is concerned, his shaken faith in Rogers is a foreshadowing of what is to come.

When Towne returns to America with Rogers, he eventually discovers that Rogers is not the hero he has supposed him to be. Rogers is not able to launch the full-scale expedition he had hoped for, and Towne is thwarted to some extent in his hope to paint all the Indians of the West. But that is not the real disappointment. Towne's final disillusionment with Rogers comes when he learns that the man has taken advantage of Towne's absence to make improper advances toward Ann Potter, a young girl Towne has taken as his unofficial ward. When all of Rogers' plans collapse and he is imprisoned by his enemies, Towne, determined to forget about his one-time hero, leaves him in search of Ann.

Eventually, after Ann and Towne have been reunited and have married, he once again meets Rogers in England. The old adventurer has been incarcerated in debtors' prison, where he shows little of his former vitality. This is in some sense an anticlimax, for Towne now merely finds proof of what he already believes. This is not the end of Rogers, however, for after his return to America Towne learns that Rogers has somehow escaped prison and is back in the colonies cooking

up great schemes. At the end of the novel Towne does not know what has happened to Rogers. But he is unwilling to believe that Rogers is dead, or that the adventurousness of which he has become the symbol is dead.

But Rogers does not emerge as a complete scoundrel. He is the victim of powerful forces that would use the American West to their own advantage. General William Johnson, the immediate administrative officer of Indian affairs, stops at nothing to keep Rogers from opening up the West. Johnson wants to keep the territory as his own private gold mine, and it is he who destroys Rogers's dream of finding the Northwest Passage.

Nor is Rogers himself without redeeming qualities. If he is an opportunist, he is also a dreamer. If Langdon Towne is disillusioned by the man who was once his hero, he is nevertheless permanently infused with the same dream of expansion and adventure that first attracted him to Rogers. Rogers becomes, in fact, the

symbol of whatever impulse it was that led men to keep pushing back the frontiers until a country had been created that stretched from sea to sea.

A final redeeming quality should be noted, particularly in a time when one of the great concerns is with the dignity and rights of men. Rogers was a master Indian fighter, but he respected and understood the Indians. In the novel the Indians trust Rogers as they trust no other white man, and he does nothing to betray that trust.

Roberts has written, then, on two levels. In the first place he has woven a narrative of a young man, struggling to find his identity as a young artist in a young land. That in itself is a worthy undertaking. In the second place, he has attempted to make immediate and real a historical character, a minor historical figure to be sure, but one who represents one of the most important forces in the early history of the United States.

THE NOTEBOOKS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI

Type of work: Journals and notes

Author: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

First published: *Treatise on Painting*, 1651; *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by Edward MacCurdy, 2 vols., 1938

One need only look at one of Leonardo's paintings to realize that he was a man of great genius, but the vast range of that genius is not fully appreciated until one has read his notebooks. Very little is revealed there about the man as a person, but very much about his genius. It is not so much the fact that the notebooks are not a diary as it is that the external facts of life, love, friendship, and the like, are unimportant when placed beside the life of the mind. The notebooks are a record of Leonardo's love affair with his own mind and with everything that came within the sight of his outer and inner eye. The notebooks reveal an eye and sensitivity more acute than even those of Gerard Manley Hopkins, who in his note-

books also looked for the essence of all phenomena. Leonardo was a born artist, but he was also a made artist. The notebooks evidence his careful preparation. Read carefully, they reveal both what Leonardo achieved and how he achieved it.

The portions of the notebooks that are extant were written during the last thirty years of his life and cover several thousand pages. The mystery that surrounds Leonardo's life and art is present even in the notebooks, both in their form and in their content. The first striking example is the handwriting itself, which is backwards and moves from right to left, looking like some sort of esoteric script. Then there is the fragmentary nature of the ob-

servations. Leonardo himself commented in 1508 on the lack of order in his writings. Seldom is a point pursued more than several sentences and there is great alacrity in moving from one topic to the next. This fragmentation has caused most modern editors to classify and rearrange the entries, but the form is valuable in that it reveals the delight and spontaneous exuberance Leonardo must have felt in being able to follow and to record the wanderings of his own mind. Thus while rearrangements like Edward MacCurdy's go a long way in clarifying the contents of the original manuscript, they fail to show the reader the way Leonardo's mind worked. In some instances, the great "esemplastic" power of his imagination is lost sight of in the desire of his editors to compartmentalize. This is a fault of the earliest as well as the most recent editors.

For example, his notebooks were bequeathed to his young friend Francesco Melzi but later fell into the hands of the rather unscrupulous Pompeo Leoni. Leoni separated the scientific from the artistic observations and sold the manuscripts piecemeal. This practice probably accounts for the loss of some of the material. Further extraction took place in 1651, when the famous *Treatise on Painting* was published by Raffaello du Fresne. This treatise is based upon the notebooks and represents Leonardo's observations on the craft and aims of painting. Though it organizes these observations, they lose something by being taken out of their original context. In the nineteenth century the drawings were taken out of the manuscripts and bound together. These drawings were intended to follow the text, and although their quality as drawings is remarkable, their removal from their context has somewhat distorted their meaning.

What is important to remember is that although there is no clear organization in the notebooks, there is also no separation. The eye controls everything. Thus Leonardo's observations on science and on art are part of the same interest. Though

painting is in Leonardo's terms a higher human activity than science, it cannot be said that "science is simply the handmaiden of the arts. It is more accurate to say that for him science was an art and art a science. There is an empirical base and philosophical end for both, and art achieves this end more completely than science.

Leonardo dissected over thirty human bodies, it is said, and his notebooks contain some brilliant anatomical drawings. These drawings were not undertaken or executed simply to prepare the painter. Nor was the study of water and its movement undertaken solely for the purpose of creating more lavish landscapes in the paintings. Leonardo's mind was attracted to such studies because it had an insatiable desire to know. Painting, architecture, scientific experiments and philosophical theorizing were all part of this desire to know. Knowing begins with the study of everything the eye can see, thus the empirical base, and concludes with the perception of the unity that lies beneath everything—that is, the philosophical end. It is not so much an accretion of facts that when added up produce unity as it is the fact that each recorded observation of a natural phenomenon provides a microcosm in which unity, the macrocosm, can be perceived. This is another reason why a rearrangement and classification of the material in the notebooks provides a misleading description of the ways in which Leonardo's mind moved.

A closer look at some of the recorded observations will strengthen this claim for the indivisibility of his observations. The bulk of Leonardo's extant writings have to do with science, and his delight in these speculations is readily apparent. Because most of his scientific knowledge was not made known until long after his death, it is difficult to talk about his contributions to the history of science. This fact does not affect, however, the reader's amazement in observing how far in advance of his times Leonardo was. His work on anatomy, mentioned above, is

especially startling. His drawings are astonishingly accurate, though at times he uses a larynx of a dog or a thyroid of a pig in drawing human anatomy. He records making a wax cast of the cerebral ventricles and is regarded by many historians of science as coming very close to discovering the nature of the circulatory system. The eye came in for as much consideration as the body. Indeed, the study of the eye as well as what the eye studies is central in the notebooks, both in the discussions of science and in those of art. He not only considered as far as the eye could see but further. Thus, scientific observations often run to fantasy, though the later progress of science does not make the idea of diving bells, poison gas, flying machines, tanks, and cannon seem as fantastic as they were once thought. Leonardo's drawings of floods reaches the great swirling fantasy of some of Van Gogh's skyscapes. It is with a sense of shock that we sometimes see amidst his flights of fancy such observations as "the sun does not move." But such ambiguous juxtaposition is essential to the claim for unity in all things.

If the great swirls appear to look like the curls of human hair, it is because Leonardo saw them as such. With the principle of unity always before him, he was especially attentive to analogy. The curl and the interlacing such as appears on the ceiling of the Sala delle Asse in Milan, and in the pages of the notebooks, are examples of the ambiguous perfection he found in nature and a symbol for the characteristic movement of his mind. The interlacing has neither beginning nor end. It is perfect in itself. Following the contours becomes an exciting adventure.

Although Leonardo noted that the sun did not move, and although he devoted some time in the notebooks to the study of astronomy, what really interested Leonardo about the heavenly bodies was the light they give to mankind. The scientific

study of light and shade is crucial to the observations Leonardo makes on the greatest of human activities, painting. In fact, painting's claims to superiority over the other arts rest on the fact that painting makes the greatest use of the principles of science. Painting is superior to theology because it is more specific and experiential. It is superior to poetry because it gives a more total image than poetry and expresses itself in space where poetry is limited in time. It is superior to sculpture because it explores not only space but also the way in which light works upon space. Thus painting grows out of science and reflects as well as perceives the influence of the universe. Leonardo speaks of painting in these theoretical terms, but also in practical terms, even as he does of science. Thus, while he is theoretical on comparisons between the arts or on the qualities a painter must possess, he is practical in his discussion of drapery, clouds, trees, landscapes, shadows, the mixing of paints, and the proper choice of brushes. When writing on painting his mind moves in a way characteristic of the notebooks as a whole. He alternates between an empirical philosophy and a philosophy close to the Florentine Neo-Platonists.

This ability to hold contraries together is part of the mystery that has always surrounded Leonardo. If he is not as mythical as past ages have felt, he has revealed in his notebooks how mysterious it is to be human. He writes of a dark cave and the ambivalence he feels when approaching it. He feels both fear and desire. The Faustian mind that takes all knowledge for its kingdom has led him into the cave. The notebooks, basically, are explorations of the light. A knowledge of them, plus an awareness of what he brought back from his journey into the darkness of the cave is basic to an appreciation and understanding of Leonardo's art.

NOTES FROM A BOTTLE FOUND ON THE BEACH AT CARMEL

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Evan S. Connell, Jr. (1924-)

First published: 1963

In *Notes from a Bottle Found on the Beach at Carmel*, Evan S. Connell, Jr., has boldly and simply accomplished what was only recently called the impossible. He has written a long, complex, subtle, book-length modern poem which is at once readable and worthy of admission into the small group of major poems written in our time. Known as a gifted short story writer and novelist, Connell's interest in poetry and, more important, his ease and ability in handling complex verse forms and conventions, were virtually unknown until a version of this poem appeared in *Contact*. That initial appearance and the publication of the full poem in book form should have startled the small, tight little world of poets writing today, but the book has largely been ignored in the world of poetry because it jars safe assumptions and rattles skeletons in closets. Although it came upon the scene unannounced, like a poor relation, it has found an audience.

The basic fable of the poem is clearly established in the title. It is, indeed, a work in the form of notes, snippets and fragments written by an archetypal seafarer and addressed to whom it may concern. He, the narrator, is at once all voyagers, all sailors and, as well, the author himself. The poem ranges wide and free among cultures and traditions, in time and space; and in the modern fashion established by Eliot and Pound its method is chiefly allusive. If this poem were to be indexed and footnoted, it would surely equal the *Cantos* in its multiplicity of reference; yet Connell's allusions are not so much personal as representative of the fiber of our modern intellectual culture. Thus the work is accessible to the intelligent, educated reader. It should also be noted that the book bears a definite relationship to the work of James Joyce. Like

Finnegans Wake, it is a nightmare of all human history, all recorded time being, as in a dream, simultaneous, equally valid, and dramatic. Yet, somehow, Connell has managed to create a dream which is more universally the troubled dream of Western man in the atomic age.

The reason for the universality of the poem must surely lie in the fact that, even though it is radical and altogether modern in decoration and details, its general metaphor of the life of man as a blind pilgrimage, a sea voyage without chart or destination, is one of the oldest in our literary history. During the transition from paganism to Christianity Saint Augustine preserved this image as a valid one for the Christian era. In the history of English literature we are familiar with its implications from the Anglo-Saxon "Seafarer" (to which Connell frequently alludes) into our own time with such poems as Joyce Cary's *The Drunken Sailor*, a poem which in many ways parallels Connell's. Connell is obviously aware of the tradition to which his poem belongs, for on several occasions he invokes Saint Augustine as the patron saint of the poem.

Not surprisingly, the basic theme is human suffering in all ages, from Babylonian sacrifice to the modern concentration camp, to reveal the evidently irremediable loneliness and cruelty of the human animal. As the voyage continues, one by one all hopes and illusions are stripped away from the seafarer. Nothing makes sense or has meaning except the lonely voyage itself. At the moment of truth, however, the naked existential corner from which no man can flee, Connell turns back to the example of Boethius and Saint Augustine, achieving a resolution which must be called a triumph in a world without victories. It is the wisdom

and triumph of Job. The final line of the poem, an insistence on submission, is precisely the Boethian choice, the more profound because, in spite of its merciless view of the ashes of human history and absurdity, it is a *free* choice.

Although the matter of *Notes* is complex and cumulative in the sense that bits and pieces cannot be abstracted easily from the texture of the whole, still it is characterized by lucid writing in verse. There has been no attempt to make the manner correspondingly difficult. Line by line, stanza by stanza, the verse is clear and coherent. There is no virtuoso writing for its own sake which might conceivably detract from the total impact. Basically, Connell uses a wide variety of free stanzaic forms. Periodically for the

sudden intrusion of abstract speculation he employs a quick one- or two-line epigrammatic statement, as though it were a marginal note to the action of the poem.

Variation is created by differences in length of line and stanzaic unit. Familiar verse forms are not used and Connell does not rely upon the obvious devices of poetry. Instead, he bases his form upon direct statement and the various rhythms of the spoken language. The possibilities of the form are exemplified by a passage, spoken by a concentration camp victim who returns to the scene of the crime.

Connell has written a long, religious poem at a time when both the long poem and the religious symbols which are its life blood have been declared defunct.

THE NOVICE

Author: Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov (1814-1841)

Type of work: Poem

First published: 1840

Mikhail Lermontov grew up in post-Napoleonic Europe which for Russian intellectuals was a setting of frustration and disillusionment. By 1820 the Decembrists, a revolutionary movement of noblemen and intellectuals influenced by the French Revolution, had formed secret societies advocating governmental reforms. In December, 1825, they led an uprising demanding a constitution, whereupon Tsar Nicholas I had hundreds of the potential reformers arrested and exiled to Siberia. This evidence of their ineffectual position gave the intellectuals a sense of hopelessness. Despite the fact that government censorship forbade any direct mention of the rebellion, its memory persisted with liberal writers, Pushkin and Lermontov among them.

Lermontov's political reasons for disgust with the mediocrity of the reign of Nicholas I were complemented by his personal dissatisfaction with himself. His romantic, Byronic attitude elevated freedom to an absolute value. Although he

viewed society with a cynical dislike, he had an agonizing desire to be accepted by it. His desire for freedom, his sense of alienation from life, and his conception of personal tragedy are perhaps best expressed in his narrative poem *The Novice*, known also by its Georgian title, *Mtsyri*.

Lermontov's earliest draft of *The Novice* was made in 1830 and was called *A Confession*. Five years later the theme was incorporated into the second part of a poem called *The Boyar Orsha*. Evidently still not pleased, Lermontov began a new version in 1837. In this variant he changed the background from a vague "old Russian setting" to the exotic and wild Caucasus. The outline of the poem was taken from a monk's tale. In the previous versions a young man confessed a sinful love affair, but instead of repenting, he was defiant and demanded freedom.

The monk's tale, which it is believed Lermontov heard in the Caucasus in

1837, was about a Caucasian boy captured by Russians and left at a monastery. The boy became a novice but felt a nostalgia for his former life and freedom. He escaped from the monastery but lost his way in a forest where the monks found him and brought him back. The futility of his escape made him resigned to a life in the monastery where he remained from then on.

Lermontov used the monk's tale as a basis for his poem, but he dramatically altered the emphasis. He developed the boy's flight and descriptions of the surrounding Caucasus and left out entirely the resignation of the recaptured boy. The theme thus becomes the search for freedom. It is interesting to note that the poem passed the censors at a time when the use of the word "freedom" was forbidden. The critic Janko Lavrin has said that probably the adventures of the novice during his escape were exciting enough to distract the censor from the underlying meaning.

The novice, in fact, preferred death to imprisonment in the monastery. For three days he wandered through the forest delighting in nature and his newly-won freedom. One night he was attacked by a panther which he managed to kill with only a stick. On the third day he began to sense that he had not escaped yet, and when he heard the church-bell of the monastery ringing, he knew that he had unwittingly circled his "cage." Shattered by the knowledge that he would never reach the land of his childhood, he fell to the ground unconscious. The monks discovered him and carried him, dying, back to the monastery. Instead of repenting to his father confessor, the boy told him why he tried to escape and described his adventures during the three days of freedom. He was sad only that he had not succeeded in escaping and remained defiant to his death.

In a sense, the poem speaks of alienation from society. The novice shuns all people and is happy only when he is alone with nature. Although his adven-

ture ends in death, he is satisfied with having felt "the devouring fire of the sun of being." He tells the abbot that he became friends with the storm and seized lightning in his hands. The freedom he yearns for is shaped around the romantic ideal of the union of man and nature. In contrast, by the hopelessness of escape, Lermontov shows man's real condition.

In much of his work Lermontov depicted happiness and peace as a condition of closeness to nature. Another theme common to much of Lermontov's work is ■ nostalgia for the past. In *The Novice* both of these themes are apparent. Although there are no overt political allusions, the poem can certainly be read on the political level. Janko Lavrin, in his book *Lermontov*, agrees with the many readers who must have identified the novice's cage with the political cage of Lermontov's Russia.

In meter and diction *The Novice* is related to Zhukovsky's "Prisoner of Chillon." Zhukovsky was largely responsible for the refined and elegant vocabulary of Russian romantic poetry. He also introduced blank verse into Russian poetry. *The Novice* is written in four-footed iambics with a vigorous and bracing rhythm. Although Lermontov's ideas and expression here are romantic and grandiose, they are acceptable because the whole conception is extravagant. His poetry is musical and rich in images, and if fault is to be found with it, it would lie in the mellifluous quality which at times only points up the extravagance of the content. Nevertheless, D. S. Mirsky has called *The Novice* the most sustained work of its kind in Russian literature.

Lermontov's work was always closely bound to his life, and from one point of view his poems are a psychological document of that life. In an 1839 poem, speaking of his infatuation with his "demon" or rather the negative side of his own personality, he wrote, "But as I parted with other dreams, so too of him I rid myself by verse." Similarly the 1839 variant of *The Novice* was the result of

an idea haunting the poet for nine years, and it was only when he was satisfied with its expression in verse that he was rid of the idea. But the main themes of *The Novice* were not only of personal concern to Lermontov, they were in fact issues of the day. The nineteenth century Russian critic, Belinsky, spoke of Lermontov as the child of his century because his dissatisfaction with "reality"

was common to all Russian intellectuals. According to Belinsky, Lermontov lived in a period of oppression, in a nation resembling a military barracks, and there aspired to liberty. Indeed, the best proof of this statement is *The Novice* with its concern for one being's hopeless yearning for freedom and its nostalgia for an earlier, better life.

OF PLIMOUTH PLANTATION

Type of work: History
Author: William Bradford (1590-1657)
First published: 1856

Bradford's *Of Plimouth Plantation*, as the author entitled it, is generally felt by both American and English historians to be one of the most important books of the Colonial period in America. Yet the book survived apparently only by the rarest of chances. It was begun in 1630 by Bradford, who was one of the hardy band who came to Plymouth on the *Mayflower* and who served as Governor of that colony for thirty-three years; he completed Chapter X that same year. The remainder he wrote "in pieces" through 1646; later he entered a few items up to 1650.

The manuscript remained in the family, passing first to the Governor's oldest son, Major William Bradford, and subsequently to his son, Major John Bradford, and to his son Samuel. Meanwhile it was being borrowed and mined for various other histories of Colonial America. While borrowed by Increase Mather, it narrowly escaped being burned when Mather's house was destroyed in 1676. After numerous uses by other historians, it eventually came to rest in the Bishop of London's library in Fulham Palace, probably taken there by a soldier during the Revolutionary War. There it was found and the first complete edition of the manuscript was published in 1856.

Long before it was published much of the contents of the history had passed into American history and myth. Factu-

ally, Bradford's account of the trials and misadventures of the settlers at Plymouth is the fullest and best available. It begins with the unfolding of the "occasion and inducements thereunto" of the Plymouth Plantation, the author professing that he will write "in a plain style, with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things," as far as his "slender judgment" will allow. Chapter I begins with background, with the years 1550 to 1607, with the origin of the Pilgrim Church in England.

Bradford gives a telling account of how the Pilgrims were forced to flee to Holland in 1608, and of the immense suffering they there underwent, their manner of living in that alien land, and their eventual determination to sail to the New World. Eventually all preparations were made for this mighty undertaking. At first they were to sail in two ships, but one, because of the fear and duplicity of the captain, was finally abandoned, and the trip made in only one, the *Mayflower*, Christopher Jones master.

The consternation of the Pilgrims upon their arrival on the foreign shore is graphically described by Bradford. He stood "half amazed" at the people's condition upon arrival. They could see nothing but "a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men," with "savage barbarians," who were "readier to

fill" the sides of the Pilgrims "full of arrows than otherwise." The time of arrival at Cape Cod was November 11, 1620.

The First Book ends with the account of the Pilgrims' choice of Plymouth as their mainland home. After some days of searching this particular spot was chosen because the harbor was deep enough to accommodate shipping and because after investigation the settlers found back from the coast "divers cornfields and little running brooks, a place "just as they supposed fit for situation." On the twenty-fifth of December they began to "erect the first house for common use" at Plymouth.

The account of the landing at the spot that has later become associated with Plymouth Rock is interesting in its non-dramatic quality. Bradford's is the only contemporary account of that landing, and it is notable in its differing from the account which popular lore now associates with the landing. There was no rock; this was the later invention of Elder John Faunce who in 1741, at the age of ninety-five, identified a certain rock as the "place where the forefathers landed." The landing was made from a shallop, not the *Mayflower*; there were no women present, and no Indians appeared with hands outstretched in greeting.

Bradford's "Second Book" was handled, for the sake of brevity, "by way of annals, noting only the heads of principal things, and passages as they fell in order of time, and may seem to be profitable to know or to make use of." It begins with the famous Mayflower Compact, which was "Occasioned partly by the discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers," that is, non-Separatists, voiced about their future: "That when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to command them, the patent they had being for Virginia and not for New England."

Next comes the account of the starving days, when of the original passengers on the *Mayflower* more than half died, "es-

pecially during January and February, two or three a day," of hunger or of scurvy and other diseases. At times there were only "six or seven sound persons" to tend the numerous sick and dying.

The account of the first Thanksgiving is given with Bradford's simplicity and restraint, with hints of the joy showing through. All things were had "in good plenty," and all colonists were "recovered in health and strength." Fish and fowl were plentiful. Besides numerous fowl "there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc." All the great provisions "made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not fained but true reports." Thus Bradford gives the account of the origins of one of America's great institutions.

After the first rich harvest, however, lean days returned. Bradford records them faithfully and fully. He records also the numerous other occurrences: the arrival of new ships with additions to the colony, accounts of numerous encounters with the Indians, associations with the surrounding colonies. One of the interesting sections is that concerning the organization of the Undertakers, the people combining their talent and energy in a herculean effort to lift the debt imposed by the London Adventurers, the people in England who had financed the flight of the Pilgrims in the first place and who continued to exact payment from the Pilgrims for a debt that never grew smaller, no matter how much New England material was returned in payment.

There is an interesting and derogatory account of the notorious settlement at Merrymount, founded by one Captain Wollaston and two or three other persons who brought numerous servants with them from England. After Wollaston departed for Virginia, Merrymount was taken over by a Mr. Morton, a man "having more craft than honesty," who led the Merrymounters in "a dissolute life, pouring out themselves into all profaneness. And Morton became Lord of Mis-

rule," and continued as such until John Endicott came from England, caused the maypole to be cut down, "rebuked them for their profaneness and admonished them to look there should be better walking." This event has been beautifully written up by Nathaniel Hawthorne in "The Maypole of Merrymount."

Another interesting account is that of Roger Williams, whom Bradford calls "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts but very unsettled in judgment." Bradford tells how Williams, viewed by many present-day commentators as perhaps the first American democrat, fell "into some strange opinions, and from opinion to practice" which eventu-

ally caused his exile and his founding of Providence, Rhode Island, a haven for persons interested in freedom of conscience.

The essentially gentle and Christian character of the chronicler is revealed in his final comment on Williams, clearly a pointed sword in the side of the church. "He is to be pitied and prayed for; and so I shall leave the matter and desire the Lord to show him his errors and reduce him into the way of truth."

From beginning to end such is the tone of this great account of America's forefathers, without which our histories would be incomplete.

OLD CALABRIA

Type of work: Travel book

Author: Norman Douglas (1868-1952)

First published: 1915

Old Calabria, it is generally agreed, is the best travel book ever written about Italy. Norman Douglas was particularly well suited to write such a book. He was well traveled, knew six languages, and was an enthusiastic amateur zoologist and geologist. He was an aristocrat and a skeptic who thought knowledge was not only power but good fun. With people he was direct and unsentimental, yet he had an understanding of the geographical, political, economic, and religious factors that had made them what they were. As an observer he was precise and objective, and as a writer he was able to communicate his great zest for life by his humorous, vigorous style.

His account is the result of several tours of southern Italy made by train, by cart, by walking, in 1907 and 1911. He begins near the east coast, in Saracen Lucera. In Lucera the people had a passion for monuments which they erected and then changed with every political change. From Lucera he went to Manfredonia on the coast, a peculiar city whose streets ran into the sea instead of alongside it, possi-

bly for ease in defense as the city had been sacked and burnt on several occasions. Here there were no trees and Douglas speculates on the results of this denuding of the land. Centuries before the buildings had been made of wood; now all were of stone, bare and grim-looking. Nowhere was there shade from the intense sunlight. Because of their hard life in a burning limestone desert, the people had no charm or sense of humor and their faces appeared to be cut out with a hatchet.

Northeast of Manfredonia the archangel Michael is supposed to have appeared on top of a mountain, at the bottom of which there is now a sacred but gloomy and odiferous cave where thousands of pilgrims come to worship. Douglas found the pilgrims repulsive, inept, dazed and weak; their very existence was bestial in its blankness. He felt unable to love or respect them; to pity them would be in accord with their religion but not with his. He felt that once divinity is comprehended by the masses it ceases to be efficacious, and that fanatics such as

these are more to be feared than criminals, for they will commit any enormity in the name of their religion.

Venosa, in the land of Horace, he called a dirty city, full of mutilated stone lions. It is a city of peasant proprietors and field laborers who have little to do with one another, and no middle class: As a result the city suffers. The tax system here, as everywhere in Calabria is oppressive; every conceivable item is taxed so that law breaking becomes a virtual necessity. Nearby is a decayed Benedictine abbey remarkable for containing relics of Hebrew, Norman and Roman origin. Men were digging tunnels to create an aqueduct system. Douglas recalls that Horace liked his nature tame, subservient to man, and that in fact all southern Italians have a utilitarian view of nature. They prefer a garden or cultivated area to a wild one and a vegetable garden to a flower garden. He tried in vain to locate various sites mentioned by Horace and concluded that the wise man learns to close an eye and thus sees many fine things.

As he moved southward, Douglas observed the peasants and found that generally there was little to admire in this whole class of men; they were retrogressive and ungenerous and lived like beasts. In one region the peasants had profiles like Plato and Augustus and the manners of Louis Quatorze. These people he found to be truly philosophic in the face of adversity and he sympathized with them. Emigration, he thought, had both good and bad results. It shattered family life, but the sons who went to America and Argentina sent back money every month and sometimes returned with large sums. With this aid their families flourished. Meanwhile the landlords remained impoverished. These peasants spoke of "governing" the soil, a word they used when speaking of rearing children. Douglas was amazed to discover that they had little or no color sense. Everything was either black or white. He asked a boy what color the sea was on a day when it was sparkling sapphire. The boy pon-

dered a moment and then said that the water was a dirty gray. Clear blue sky the peasants called white. Douglas found the peasant also lacked a sense of the beauty around him; to him things were either useful or not useful. His life was hard and thus he had no sense of humor, which comes only with ease.

Taranto, on the gulf, was a clean and modern-looking city but was quite treeless because the inhabitants preferred to live like fish in a bowl, looking out the windows at what went on in the street or looking unashamedly in others' windows. Wherever trees were planted, the rents went down. Moving on around the inland sea, Douglas hunted for Virgil's river but found it difficult to identify because so many streams had dried up as a result of deforestation. In these treeless, torrid towns the upper classes were mellowed and enlightened, civilized without being commercialized. The middle class was ignorant of the outside world, know nothing of other countries or manners and were even separated from their own country folk. They had no new ideas and no ambitions. It was said that the middle class was like mules: they had to be worked thirteen hours out of twelve. Lacking trees and water, the soil was extremely dry and the dust lay inches thick. Douglas felt that this condition was in large part responsible for these people staying shut-in from the world. He himself, a large and strong man, needed heavy walking boots and a stout stick to move about on the roads. Had the soil been granitic, perhaps the people would not have been so sluggish and divorced from nature.

Douglas found humor in their pattern of courtship. In the cool evenings young men would walk out and gaze at young women, on balconies, who gazed back. Passionate letters were exchanged, suicides threatened and sometimes carried out, because to kill oneself for love was considered to be manly; but these suicides were always carefully calculated and family, doctor, and friends were informed beforehand so that no one ever

died. The young people indulged themselves in these ways until the time came for marriage; then there was no sentiment but a cash transaction. No credit was allowed.

Douglas endured poor accommodations and poorer food on his ramblings. He believed that all the people were misfed and that a proper diet would change their outlook and character. As it was, they had a tigerish temperament—a simple person would be quickly destroyed—and the look of envy and sheer hunger. Utilitarianism, he felt, is the shadow of starvation, whereas romance is the vapor of repletion. It is simply a question of nutrition.

In Cosenza, Douglas had one aim only: to find a book by Francesco Zicari, published in Naples in 1845, in which Zicari showed that Milton took much of *Paradise Lost* from a sacred tragedy called *Adamo Caduto*, written in 1647 by Serafino della Salandra, a Franciscan monk. Douglas had had an article on this subject published by Bliss Perry in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He had once seen the book in the Naples library, but he never found a copy in a bookstore.

In the Sila region Douglas found many Albanians. They were hospitable but hotheaded and liberal, constantly embroiled with one another and the government. Their language had thirty alphabets.

Douglas described the religious attitude of the southern Italian and the rise of the Madonna cults. These were spread by the monks and took the place of the Greek nymphs and Venus cults. The

Madonna and women-saints were peculiarly suited to a pastoral people and also to a settled society, whereas man-saints were separatists and fighters for their towns. To the southern Italian the Trinity was Mary, Joseph, and Child. The Vatican encouraged the growth of these cults for political reasons and for money. At no one other time had there been so many ecclesiastics and brigands in this country, often one and the same. Thousands of miracles were claimed, such as flying monks, these being attested by princes and popes. In 1784 even the bishop was a brigand chief and seven thousand homicides a year were listed for the kingdom of Naples. Justice was a mockery, to be had only for money; the reading of Voltaire was punished with three years of slavery in the galleys and several thousand citizens were hanged for expressing liberal opinions. No one was on the side of the policemen; old farmers used to advise their sons to shoot one whenever possible.

For two thousand years the entire coastline of Calabria had been subject to malaria. The deforestation and blocking up of rivers had contributed to its growth, a disease which Douglas thought helped explain the people, their habits, and their history.

Douglas last stopped at Cotrone, a city visited by George Gissing, stayed at the same hotel, saw some of the same people. He reflected that southern Italy was no place to travel alone. One needed company in that fierce, uncompromising land.

THE OLD REGIME IN CANADA

Type of work: History

Author: Francis Parkman (1823-1893)

Time: 1604-1763

Locale: Canada

First published: 1874

Principal personages:

CHARLES SAINT-ÉTIENNE DE LA TOUR, the holder of land grants in Acadia

CHARLES DE MENOU D'AUNAY CHARNISAY, his political rival

FATHER PONCET, a Jesuit missionary
 FRANÇOIS XAVIER DE LAVAL-MONTMORENCY, Bishop of Quebec
 ABBÉ DE QUEYLUS, Vicar-general of Canada, Bishop Laval's rival
 BISHOP SAINT-VALLIERS, Bishop Laval's successor
 THE VICOMTE D'ARGENSON, Governor of Quebec, Bishop Laval's rival
 BARON DU BOIS D'AVAUGOUR, Argenson's successor
 FATHER SIMON LE MOYNE, a missionary priest
 CHOMEDEY DE MAISONNEUVE, Governor of Montreal
 JEAN BAPTISTE TALON, Intendant of Quebec
 THE MARQUIS PROUVILLE DE TRACY, Lieutenant-general of America,
 1663-1665

Francis Parkman, along with William Hickling Prescott and John Lothrop Motley, is one of the great American historians of the nineteenth century and indeed of the twentieth also. Parkman differs from the other two in that he had a controlled style not subject to useless rhetorical flights, and he was more able to give to his writings a sense of immediacy.

His great accomplishment as historian derives from at least three firm beliefs about the art of this craft. He believed that the historian should pay close attention to research, going to primary documents wherever possible, and he made numerous trips, several across the Atlantic, to examine primary sources. He believed the historian should pay strict attention to developing his work dramatically and should closely observe the proportions of the various sections. He believed, finally, that the proper style of historical writing should be vigorous, without studied prettiness or "tricks of rhetoric." As a consequence of these basic tenets, Parkman's works remain readable and lively today.

The Old Regime in Canada is the fourth of a series of works known collectively as *France and England in North America*, published in eleven volumes from 1851 to 1892. It reveals his biases and prejudices typically. He disdained commerce, cared little for democracy but hated tyranny, loved the good old days when men were men, was a political reactionary. As Parkman says in his book, "My political faith lies between two vicious extremes, democracy and absolute authority, each of which I detest, the more because it tends to react into the

other." Although he did not "object to a good constitutional monarchy, he preferred a conservative republic." Further, he obviously respected Englishmen more than he did Frenchmen, and he had greater regard for Protestantism than for Catholicism.

The Old Regime in Canada begins with a Preface that sets the tone, a quotation from the nineteenth century French critic of America, Alexis de Tocqueville: "The physiognomy of a government can best be judged in its colonies, for there its characteristic traits usually appear larger and more distinct. When I wish to judge of the spirit and the faults of the administration of Louis XIV, I must go to Canada. Its deformity is there seen as through a microscope." Parkman's volume is an attempt to show by what methods the monarchy of France "stroved to make good its hold (on North America), why it achieved a certain kind of success, and why it failed at last."

The first edition of this work begins in 1653, with the Jesuits at Onandaga, not, as in the revised edition, with material drawn from the papers of La Tour and D'Aunay, the rival claimants to Acadia. Immediately the strength of Parkman's method is apparent. No detail is too small for his consideration and inclusion. He believes, for example, that "the key" to the history of early New France is "incessant supernaturalism." He demonstrates with numerous examples. For one he quotes Father Poncet's insistence that the "holy angels" revealed their intervention in the affairs of men by their use of the number nine, "which," Father

Poncet said, "is specially dedicated to them." Another "prodigy" he records is that of a French priest's head, severed from the body, speaking to the Iroquois in their own language. Another example of Parkman's use of detail and the emergence of bias against his will can be seen in his account telling how a group of French Algonquins captured a "Wolf" or Mohegan Indian who had been naturalized among the Iroquois. The Algonquins brought him to Quebec and burned him. The Jesuits made no effort to prevent this atrocity although they obviously could have done so with the slightest protest. Parkman insists that the Jesuits allowed this monstrous behavior not only because of unwillingness to curb the savagery of their Indian allies but also, perhaps more importantly, because of religious motives. To them torture was spiritually therapeutic. Parkman quotes, with heavy irony, one of the Jesuits: "Is it not a marvel to see a wolf changed at one stroke into a lamb, and enter into the fold of Christ, which he came to ravage?"

He chronicles with thoroughness all the various aspects of Canadian life, development, and conflict. Because he felt that Roman Catholicism was stronger than any other single power in shaping the character and destiny of Canada, he develops this theme in detail and discusses at great length the conflict between Argenson, the Governor of Canada, and the fiery Jesuit Laval, and the triumph of the Church. Again and again, as Parkman shows, Bishop Laval, the "modest Levite," prevailed, until he became the greatest power in Canada and thought himself beyond human law.

Parkman develops beautifully the resolution of Louis XIV not to abandon New France to mere trade. In his effort to make Canada an extension of old France, Louis poured soldiers, settlers, equipment and women for wives into the country. About the last there grew up among hostile critics many accusations against their virtue; Parkman demonstrates, however, that these women were in general quite

moral, were hard working, and made themselves good wives and helpmates.

The success or failure of French rule in Canada rested to a large extent on the government, closely modeled after that of the French province which in the old country was something of an anachronism, the past vying with the present. The Canadian government moved into absolutism, cramping and crushing life. Further, the government was frustrated and thwarted by the zealous activity of the Jesuits. Added to these weaknesses were the vitiating activities of various Indian tribes, the selfishly independent activities of the *coureurs de bois* trading in beaver furs and other commodities with the Indians. The consequence, inevitably, was failure.

Parkman explicitly points out what to him were the reasons for the failure of French Canada, and in doing so he contrasts Canada with the British Colonies, revealing his own biases and points of view. The nature of education in Canada, essentially held under the heel of despotism, was doomed to failure. The Church and state exercised too much control; their error lay not in exercising power, for the people were not trained to be their own rulers, but in failing to train the people for eventual self-control. The English were superior because they had been trained in "reflection, forecast, industry, and self-reliance." To Parkman, "Freedom is for those who are fit for it." Though critical of most characteristics of Canadian government and people, Parkman does praise the military efficiency there. The absolute government utilized the skillful woodsman to the fullest advantage. The most conspicuous characteristic of Canadian life was the power of the Roman Catholic Church, which was more powerful and lasting than the provincial government.

The "grand crisis" in Canadian history, as Parkman says, was the conquest by the English and the peace of 1763. With this conquest came Protestantism and a consequent purification of the

Church, material growth, patriotism, and a "rational and ordered liberty."

According to Parkman's final sentence

in the volume, "A happier calamity never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by the British arms."

ON HEROES, HERO-WORSHIP AND THE HEROIC IN HISTORY

Type of work: Philosophy of history

Author: Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

First published: 1841

Difficult to read today, Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, serves as the best repository in English of that development in late Romanticism that Eric Bentley has called "heroic vitalism." Consisting of a series of six lectures that Carlyle delivered to London audiences in 1840, it represents not so much any soundly based ideas about the making of history as it does Carlyle's view of what the world would be if powerful and inspired men were to have the power he thought they deserved. It thus becomes England's contribution to the nineteenth century cult of the great man, a rather deadly dream most seductively attractive to intellectuals forced to huckster their ideas in the market place with all other merchants, but closed off from the real power that is exercised in this new industrial world by economic entrepreneurs.

Carlyle's basic idea is that all history is the making of great men, gifted with supreme power of vision or action. It thus becomes our duty to "worship Heroes." (Carlyle abounds in capital letters. They often serve him instead of reason.) "We all of us reverence and must ever reverence Great Men: this is, to me, the living rock amid all the rushings-down whatsoever; the one fixed point in modern revolutionary history, otherwise as if bottomless and shoreless." Clearly in the world of onrushing liberalism and industrialism, with memory of God ever dimming through the growth of science and scepticism, Carlyle needs a faith and presents us one in the worship of great men.

This faith, dubious enough under restrictions of law and order, becomes even more so in Carlyle's handling of it. As the six lectures progress, he moves from myth to history with no clear distinction and offers as equally great or heroic, leaders of religious movements, great poets, and military conquerors. Hero worship not only ought to be devout; it actually was. In Carlyle's estimation, love of God is virtually identical with loyalty to a leader. Despite his scorn for business activity and its operators, Carlyle's heroes are all men of practical intelligence. He values the same kind of industriousness, resoluteness, and obvious sincerity that could serve to build economic as well as political or clerical empires.

Carlyle begins his historical survey with the hero as prophet. Mohammed made Islam a historical force through the sword, but history sustained his vision and rewarded him; hence he is a hero in Carlyle's pantheon. The prophet as hero is a terrifying figure of a bygone age; much more in character with our spirit is the poet as hero. After discussing poetry as a romantic vision that makes the poet spiritual kinsman of the prophet, Carlyle treats Dante's *Divine Comedy* as the poem of an age of faith. He calls it "genuine song," but it is the Christian message that Carlyle really values: the literary work is an allegory of the invisible idea. As Dante gave us "Faith, or a soul," so Shakespeare gave us "Practice, or body." Poet-heroes are born, not made; thus Carlyle's Shakespeare is a romantic visionary whom we can only adore, not analyze.

Shakespeare must have suffered heroically himself; otherwise he could not have created Hamlet or Macbeth.

The hero as priest is a spiritual captain, unlike the prophet who was a spiritual king. Luther and Knox are Carlyle's subjects, for, even though they were primarily reformers, they are finally more priestlike than the priests. As all his heroes, they are "sincere" visionaries who saw the truth and led their followers forth to battle for it. (Carlyle abounds in military metaphor, whether he writes of men of peace or war.) Great religious leaders battle idolatry, which of course is symbolic. But it is insincere symbolism, and therefore to be destroyed. Here Carlyle notes that the significant visionary everywhere is the man who combats delusion and outworn convention. Every hero, every image-breaker, comes to a new sense of reality that he brings to the world. He must "stand upon things, not upon the shadow of things."

Protestantism dwindled into faction in Germany, according to Carlyle, but in Scotland, with John Knox, Lutherism found its true home. (Here, and later with Boswell and Burns, Scottish Carlyle has a special fondness for his countrymen who found fame and success.) We may censure Puritanism, but it is fervent faith that brought democracy to England, through Cromwell, and colonized much of America as well. Knox was intolerant and despotic, but he was a zealot and therefore a hero for Carlyle, who distinguishes between good and bad tyrannies with reasons he never discusses.

The heroes who are closest to Carlyle's audience were Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns. As the priests are less than the prophets, so the heroic men of letters are less than the poets. For Carlyle, Goethe is the only heroic poet of the preceding century. Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns were seekers after truth rather than bringers of it. Here Carlyle delivers a famous paean of praise for learning and publishing, from the Bible to the newspaper. All our

ideas are first books; then they become institutions and empires. The eighteenth century was a sceptical age, disbelieving, and therefore unheroic and insincere. Carlyle's trio all had to struggle against the climate of opinion and against poverty, as all real visionaries should. Boswell picked his hero well, for Johnson's gospel of moral prudence and practical sense was necessary in an age of cant.

Carlyle presents Rousseau doubtfully. Too complex and introspective to be a Carlyle hearty, and French as well, Rousseau stands as an ambiguous hero whom Carlyle acclaims as a zealot but blames for the fanaticism of the French Revolution. His veneration of the savage (Carlyle's conclusion) abetted the French lapse into savagery. Robert Burns is a much more engaging figure, and Scottish. But Carlyle contradicts himself by admitting that Burns' career was virtually ruined by the lionizing paid him by his hero worshippers in Edinburgh.

The last heroism for Carlyle is kingship—the leadership of people in war and politics. Interestingly, though, the leaders he specifically presents are not revolutionary heroes, but anti-revolutionaries. Heroes seek order, and order to Carlyle is discipline and peace, even at the cost of liberty and variety. Napoleon came to equate himself with France, and so fulfilled his ego at the cost of his nation. But Carlyle obviously respects Napoleon's practical intelligence that enabled him to seize the salient factor in a situation and make fools of Europe's conventional generals and statesmen.

Throughout his effusive presentation Carlyle never really analyzes, but exhorts, praises, and condemns. Obviously he admires the movers and shakers of the earth; his praise of Dante and Shakespeare is perfunctory compared with his veneration of Cromwell, who could barely speak coherently, but could act and did. Anti-intellectualism, veneration of power, love of enthusiasm as an end in itself are everywhere in this work.

ON THE LAW OF WAR AND PEACE

Type of work: Treatise on International Law

Author: Hugo Grotius (1583-1645)

First published: 1625

On the Law of War and Peace (*De jure belli ac pacis*), the first systematic treatise on international law, remains a great landmark in the history of modern civilization and one of the foundations of modern international law. Grotius had a three-fold reason for writing his great book. First, he was morally and philosophically concerned with the problem of war. He was not a utopian who hoped to outlaw war, which he thought a regrettable but natural thing, but a practical attorney and an erstwhile public official who hoped to regulate and mitigate the horrors of conflict. As he says in his "Prolegomena" to *On the Law of War and Peace*, "Throughout the Christian world I observed a lack of restraint in relation to war, such as even barbarous races should be ashamed of; I observed that men rush to arms for slight causes, or no cause at all, and that when arms have once been taken up there is no longer any respect for law, divine or human; it is as if, in accordance with a general decree, frenzy had openly been let loose for the committing of all crimes." Grotius says that he is fully convinced "that there is a common law among nations, which is valid alike for war and in war." He hoped that by codifying and commenting on this "common law among nations" he would be able to create a base on which war could be understood and regulated.

His second reason for writing the book was his academic pride and self-interest. Grotius was as much a scholar as he was an active and practical man of affairs. He was one of the last great humanists; that is, one of the last great classical scholars of the Renaissance variety. To a great extent his *On the Law of War and Peace* is a scholarly study of classical Greek and Roman literature, science, and history aimed at understanding the classical ex-

perience of war, its causes, its conduct, and its effects. In this study he hoped to demonstrate, by the use of copious classical and biblical precedents, that there was indeed a set of natural and right laws pertaining to war and its conduct. Furthermore, he was aware that other scholars had attempted to make the same kind of study, but that all had failed. To complete such a study would, if nothing else, "contribute somewhat to the philosophy of the law."

Finally, Grotius was ambitious. He was a political prisoner during the time he wrote the work and he undoubtedly hoped that it would impress the world and lead to his being brought back to a position of power and responsibility.

While the title of the book would indicate that Grotius was concerned equally with war and peace, the parts of the book that have to do with peace are only grafted onto the whole. The practical, as opposed to the scholarly, genesis of the work was Grotius' experience in legal conflicts having to do with the law of prize and war on the high seas. This experience developed from certain legal problems that arose when the Dutch East India Company began to make inroads on the Portuguese trade monopoly in the Far East and Southeast Asia during the first decades of the seventeenth century.

What Grotius set out to do was to construct a system of law that was not based on the old principle of authority and decree, the principle on which was based the Roman law that dominated most of European legal study and which was the foundation of the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church. Grotius sought to replace the principle of authority with the principle of natural law common to all men and nations. The rationale of his system runs somewhat as follows: Like

Aristotle, Grotius saw man as a social animal by nature. Just as it is natural that man should form societies, it is natural that he should have laws, since society cannot exist without laws, legal rights, and a system of justice. While law is natural to man, it is a conscious product of his reason, has been developed under the control of reason, and can be developed even further than necessity has so far demanded, by the further exercise of reason.

So far, law has been strictly a matter of individual and self-sufficient states. The law of one state has had no effect on the laws of another. But just as individual men band together naturally into nations, and in so doing engage in a social contract to limit themselves by the natural (but reasonable) laws required by their nations, so individual nations band together in civilizations. That is, nations no more than individuals can live in isolation; they must associate, and in associating they must, as is true of individuals, give up some of their sovereignty. For this reason it is natural that a system of laws, manifest in custom, consent, and contract, should spring up between states. Thus we have the law of nations, which should be adhered to with the same firmness as the domestic laws of an individual nation are adhered to by its individual citizens.

Finally, both of the two great kinds of law, domestic and international, are founded on God's law. Since God created man and his nature, and since it is man's nature to organize societies, and since it is natural for societies to band together in larger societies of nations, it is natural (by God's plan) that there should be international law, codified and conforming to reason, which is also a part of man's nature as created by God. All this is a part of God's unchanging scheme of creation, and it remains only for the scholar to examine creation and human experience, and with the help of his reason perceive the structure of the Almighty's scheme of natural law.

Founded on these principles, *On the Law of War and Peace* is divided into three major sections or books. Book One is largely concerned with the definition of war, whether it is lawful, and the nature of various kinds of war. Book Two attempts to examine the causes of war. Book Three is concerned with what is lawful and permissible in war.

In Book One, beginning with the idea that war is a condition of contending by force, Grotius states that war is undertaken in order to secure peace. That is, conflict precedes war. When peaceful means fail to end the conflict, and the conflict thus continues, war is resorted to in order to end conflict and thus bring peace. The author goes on to argue that war is not contrary to the law of nature, nor is it contrary to the law of the Gospels when the soldier fights in defense of virtue and duty. Having established the legality of war, and thus the necessity of regulating it by use of reason, Grotius distinguishes between public, private, and mixed war. "A public war is that which is waged by him who has lawful authority to wage it; a private war, that which is waged by one who has not the lawful authority; and a mixed war is that which is on one side public, on the other side private." Interestingly, in discussing the question of whether an inferior may legally wage war against a superior, Grotius states the principle that underpinned many prosecution arguments at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials after World War II: "Among all good men one principle at any rate is established beyond controversy, that if the authorities issue any order that is contrary to the law of nature or to the commandments of God, the order should not be carried out."

Book Two begins with a consideration of the causes of war. The first cause is the necessity to defend self and property. Next in significance is injury, particularly injury to things which belong to men in common. Other causes discussed are acquisition of things (with particular reference, as is natural for a Dutchman, to the

sea and rivers); assumed abandonment of ownership and occupation; property rights; obligations which arise from ownership; promises and alliances; and the desire to inflict punishment. These matters and many others are discussed in great detail. Book Two concludes with discussions of unjust causes of war, among which are fear, the wish for advantage apart from necessity, and the desire for world empire. Grotius also gives warnings not to undertake war rashly and considers the problems of war undertaken on the behalf of others.

Book Three begins with a discussion of "General Rules from the Law of Nature Regarding what is Permissible in War; with a Consideration of Ruses and Falsehood." Grotius in discussing what is permissible in war makes a distinction between what is sanctioned by the law of nature on the one hand, and by the law

of nations on the other hand. His first rule, which is based on the law of nature, is that "in war things which are necessary to attain the end in view are permissible." As usual, Grotius, a Christian humanist who is discussing a frightful subject, finds that "things which are necessary" do not include all things: virtue and honor must be maintained even in the midst of deception and killing. Grotius goes on to discuss the legalities of war which must be legally declared by the proper authorities. He also examines and verifies the right of killing enemies in war, the right of devastation and pillage, the right over prisoners of war, and the right over the conquered. The second half of Book Three is concerned with mitigating the "rights" discussed in the first half and with the problem of ending war, as well as with many other matters and details.

ON THE SUBLIME

Type of work: Literary criticism

Author: Unknown, long attributed to Longinus (c. 210-273)

First transcribed: First century (?)

On the Sublime is one of a number of classical literary treatises that pose the often-considered problem of nature versus art, of the relative contributions of natural genius or inspiration and of acquired skill to great writing. The author of *On the Sublime*, who was almost certainly not Longinus, but an anonymous Greek rhetorician of the first century, argues throughout his work that it is a writer's genius that lifts the reader out of himself and exalts him above the limitations of his reason, but he points out, too, that it takes great skill, training, and self-discipline to know when to give free rein to one's genius and when to hold it in check.

This treatise is an interesting combination of philosophical speculation about the elevating, moving powers of poetry and oratory and of practical suggestions about the grammatical constructions and

figures of speech which contribute to the effectiveness of great or "sublime" writing. The author, an enthusiastic critic of his literary predecessors, often quotes Homer, Demosthenes, the great Greek dramatists, and even the Book of Genesis to illustrate the powers of literature, and he points out faults with examples from the works of lesser writers and from inferior passages in the work of the masters.

The author begins his work with a definition of the sublime in literature as a "loftiness and excellence in language" that uplifts the reader and makes him react as the writer desires him to. Sublimity may arise from a few words that cast light on a whole subject, or it may be the result of the expansion and development of an idea; the treatise suggests that the former method is generally the more powerful.

The great danger for the writer who

seeks to create a sublime passage is that he will lapse into bombast, that what he intends to be majestic will be simply an empty show. Other potential traps are affectation in expression and empty emotionalism, the display of passion that is not sufficiently motivated. The search for novelty, which on occasion can create a striking effect, may also result in inappropriate imagery and diction. The elements of the truly sublime in literature are often hard to distinguish; they are known chiefly by their effect, the reader's sense of exaltation. Too, a great passage will grow in meaning and significance with each rereading.

Five "sources" of the sublime are outlined. Two of these are results of the natural capacities of the author: grandeur of thought and the vivid portrayal of the passions. The other three are basically rhetorical skills: the appropriate use of figures of speech, suitable diction and metaphors, and the majestic composition or structure of the whole work.

The most important of these sources is the first, which rests upon the sweep of the author's mind. However, while a great intellect is innate, it may be enlarged by association with great ideas. Reading the finest works of the past and pondering them is always valuable, though even the greatest minds can sometimes fall below their customary level. The author suggests that Homer's *Odyssey* is throughout on a lower plane of intensity than his *Iliad*. It is the work of an aging man who dreams, but "he dreams as Zeus might dream."

One of the tormented love lyrics of Sappho, the Greek poetess, is analyzed to illustrate the power of emotion to create an impression of "sublimity." The tumultuous succession of feelings, burning, shivering, fainting, are described so vividly and follow one another so closely that the reader participates in the emotional crises of the poet. However, even this technique can, in the hands of a lesser writer than Sappho, seem contrived, even ridiculous.

The author digresses from this discussion to elaborate on his earlier consideration of the relative merits of succinctness and diffuseness in the creation of sublime literature. He suggests that quickly moving, powerful language can overcome the reader or listener, convincing him in spite of his reason, whereas the more diffuse style tends to hammer an argument in through repetition, if not through logical argument. There are appropriate occasions for the use of each technique; some writers, like Demosthenes, excel in the vehement passionate outburst, while others, including Plato and Cicero, uplift their readers with a majestic flow of language.

The mention of these great masters suggests the next major point, that the aspiring writer can learn much by imitating the outstanding men of the past, by attempting to decide how Plato, Homer, or Thucydides would have expressed the idea with which he is struggling. The helpfulness of such study can be far more than stylistic, for great writing always has the power to inspire, to expand the understanding of the would-be writer.

Moving on to his third source of sublimity, the use of imagery in poetry and oratory, the author notes that the purpose of all figures of speech is to enlighten, to convince, to enrapture, and to overcome all doubt by their emotional power. Many kinds of images can create these effects. Close examination of passages from Demosthenes and others shows how the skillful choice of verbs, the use of an oath at the proper moment, the omission of conjunctions, or rhetorical questions can make the hearer assent, almost unconsciously, to the orator's premises. Again, natural genius must play an important part, for if the figures of speech are not fused into an impressive whole, they will only annoy the listener and convince him that the speaker is trying to dupe him.

The writer has many ways of influencing the emotional reactions of his readers, and the student of composition would do

well to read in full the discussion of the ways in which sentence structure can be varied, or singular and plural interchanged to produce different effects. So simple a device as shifting from the past to the present tense or from the third person to the first can bring a narrative to life.

Appropriate diction is immeasurably important in the creation of great literature. The author notes that the suitable words are not always the most beautiful or elevated ones, and he illustrates the power of commonplace expressions. Again, a writer must depend upon his taste to protect him from vulgarity or bombast.

In another important digression the author considers the relative value of the writer whose work is almost always flawless, polished, in perfect taste, without ever rising to great heights and of the one whose work has both moments of sublimity and occasional lapses in taste. It is almost impossible for these two virtues to be combined, for the mind which is dwelling on the heights may sometimes overlook details, while the one which is attentive to correctness is never free enough of trivial concerns to achieve greatness. The author of the treatise gives unqualified approval to the flawed genius, on the grounds that man has been blessed with a wide-ranging intellect that can project him beyond the bounds of his

own existence. It is both his duty and his privilege to keep his eyes focused on heavenly lights, rather than on the tiny flames lit by men.

Turning to the fifth source of sublimity, the author comments on the power of harmony in writing, as well as in music, to move men. It is the fusion of thought, diction, and imagery into one harmonious whole that builds up the reader's impression of power. The rhythm of cadence of the language, too, may enhance the almost hypnotic effect of sublime writing.

The final section of *On the Sublime* deals with the lack of great writing and oratory in the age in which the treatise was written. The author presents for consideration the argument that the benevolent despotism of the age has curtailed the creative spirit in men, but he contends that it is rather men's greed and their search for pleasure that enervate them. Men's minds are bound to earth by their quest for wealth; they no longer reach out to achieve that magnitude of mind and spirit which is essential for the great writer. Man's apathy and his indifference to all but his own immediate interests prohibit his ever joining the company of his great predecessors. On this discouraged and discouragingly modern note the treatise ends, as its author states his intention to begin another work, enlarging on what he has said here about the place of the passions in great writing.

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Type of work: Novel

Author: T. H. White (1906-1964)

Time: The Middle Ages

Locale: England

First published: *The Sword in the Stone*, 1939; *The Witch in the Wood* (*The Queen of Air and Darkness*), 1940; *The Ill-Made Knight*, 1941; *The Candle in the Wind*, 1958; *The Once and Future King*, 1958

Principal characters:

KING ARTHUR (earlier known as "Wart"), King of Gramarye

SIR KAY, Arthur's childhood playmate

SIR ECTOR, Arthur's guardian and the father of Sir Kay

SIR CRUMMORE GRUMMURSUM, a friend of Sir Ector

KING PELLIMORE, a gentle and absent-minded knight

MERLYN, a magician who is Arthur's tutor

ROBIN WOOD, a robber who lives in the forest
 MORGAN LE FAY, a wicked sorceress
 UTHUR PENDRAGON, Arthur's father and his predecessor on the throne
 QUEEN MORGAUSE, sister of Morgan le Fay and wife of King Lot of Orkney
 GAWAINE,
 AGRAVAINE,
 GARETH, and
 GAHERIS, sons of King Lot and Queen Morgause, referred to as "the Orkney faction"
 ST. TOIRDEALBLACH, a Pelagian heretic from Cornwall
 LANCELOT, an ugly boy who becomes Arthur's chief knight and Guenever's lover
 GUENEVER, Arthur's adulterous queen
 UNCLE DAP, Lancelot's tutor
 ELAINE, a girl who seduces Lancelot and bears him a son
 GALAHAD, Lancelot's son
 KING PELLIS, Elaine's father
 MODRED, the son of Arthur and Morgause who hates his father
 SIR MADOR DE LA PORTE, a knight who accuses Guenever of adultery
 SIR MELIAGRANCE, a knight who kidnaps Guenever

It is not often that a literary work becomes so much a part of the culture that it is absorbed into the body of ethnic myth. In the Western World there are three prime examples; Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. There are parallels here which may not be immediately apparent. Both Homer and Malory gathered materials which were a part of the folk traditions of their respective nations into unified wholes. Both Homer and Malory created out of a combination of myth and history idealized pictures of heroes who became in time the embodiments of national genius. Both Homer and Malory wove threads of religious allegory into their works. The works of both Homer and Malory were to become so much a part of the literary and ethnic traditions that reference to them in subsequent literary works was to cease to be literary allusion so much as to be allusion to the body of myth.

Of course, Homer seems to have gathered materials which had evidently existed previously in a purely oral tradition, while Malory drew from French and English written sources for his material. Nevertheless, to both Homer and Malory fell the task of giving form and substance

to a diffuse body of legend. Homer chose to center his works on the heroic figures of Achilles and Odysseus; Malory centered his work on the character of King Arthur. Just as Achilles, who could become so angry about a personal affront that he would endanger the whole Greek campaign against the Trojans, and Odysseus, whose principal concern was to regain the peace and comfort of his home and family, are very human, if heroic, characters, so is Arthur a very human character whose very mortality becomes the focus of Malory's work. For despite the complex mingling of the themes of love, war, and religion in Malory's story, his principal concern, as the title indicates, is with Arthur's death and with the forces which led to it.

Although Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* has been the source of countless poems and novels, including works by authors like Tennyson and Mark Twain, it has been left to T. H. White to retell Malory's story for our time. Retell it he did, with the wit and vigor of a man telling a story that happened only yesterday. *The Once and Future King* was a twenty-year project for White, and it was only when the completed work appeared that the size of his accomplishment was apparent.

Perhaps the most skillful aspect of his handling of the Arthur story is his ability to move from the witty, urbane treatment of Arthur's childhood and development under the tutelage of Merlyn to the pathos of Arthur's discouragement just before his final battle with Modred. White moves from wit and fantasy to drama so smoothly that there is never a feeling of transition.

Merlyn's approach to education has much in it that is reminiscent of works like J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or C. S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*. In these books the protagonists come to their understanding of the world and of moral and ethical values as they meet the various fantastic creatures that inhabit the worlds through which they move. Merlyn's method of educating the Wart, as Arthur is called, is to give him the forms of animals so that he can view life in different social orders. When he becomes a fish and swims in the castle moat, the great pike tells him that "Might is Right," demonstrating how the most powerful fish can rule the moat. From falcons he learns about the rigors of military life; from ants, about societies which demand total conformity; from wild geese, about heroism; and from the badger, about the potential greatness of man. His childhood is filled with the wonder of the universe as revealed by Merlyn and with adventures of the sort all boys dream about.

It is significant that Arthur receives his education with no knowledge that he is being prepared for a throne. Rather, as the mere ward of Sir Ector, he can expect to see Ector's son Kay reap whatever success can be attained. It is as much a surprise to Arthur as to Sir Ector and Sir Kay that when word comes that Uther Pendragon, ruler of Gramarye, has died and that his successor will be the person who can pull a sword out of an anvil, it is the Wart who accomplishes that feat and is acclaimed king. The tone of Arthur's rule is foreshadowed by the fact that he performs the deed which puts him on the

throne but knows at the time nothing of how the new king is to be chosen. The boy is merely trying to find a sword for Sir Kay to use in the tournament.

That Arthur's reign is to represent the establishment of a new order is clear from the first. In defending his right to the throne, Arthur first abandons the polite forms of chivalric warfare for modern tactics; then he announces that he will use Might only to accomplish Right, to which end he establishes the Round Table. Thus Arthur's reign begins and he is ready to meet a series of events which will test the efficacy of a just king.

The first test is the enmity of Queen Morgause, wife of King Lot and sister of Morgan le Fay, a test which foreshadows the eventual failure of Arthur's noble experiment. Morgause hates whoever sits on the throne of Uther Pendragon, who murdered her father and raped her mother, but she does not realize that Arthur is the child of Uther and her mother. Consequently, when she seduces Arthur in an attempt to gain power over him, she unknowingly commits incest with her half brother. The child of this union, Modred, whom she teaches along with her other sons—Gawaine, Gareth, Gaheris, and Agravaine—to hate Arthur, becomes the embodiment of the ultimate destruction of the Round Table.

The second test is the love that Lancelot, despite his worship of Arthur, bears for Arthur's queen, Guenever. Lancelot attempts to fight the temptation to commit adultery with Guenever by spending most of his time on quests, but even the noble Lancelot eventually falls prey to temptation. He is seduced by Elaine, whom he had rescued from Morgan le Fay, as she pretends to be Guenever. After this union, which produces Galahad, Lancelot gives up his resistance and enters wholeheartedly into an adulterous relationship with Guenever. But Lancelot is plagued by the loss of his virginity and purity, breaks off with Guenever, and is even insane for a time. His unsuccessful fight against temptation becomes a kind

of microcosmic representation of Arthur's ultimately unsuccessful attempt to establish a kingdom of justice.

While Arthur attempts to find ways to control and to use wisely the Might at his command, his troubles merely increase. The "Orkney faction," the sons of Morgause, stir up discontent. Arthur initiates the quest for the Holy Grail to provide a healthy outlet for the energies of the knights of the Round Table, but although Galahad eventually finds the Grail, the best knights are lost in the search and the other knights become quarrelsome and decadent. Lancelot and Guenever are twice accused of adultery and Lancelot has to face two trials by combat, the second time murdering Sir Meliagrance to keep him from revealing evidence.

Faced with the spiritual and physical disintegration of his kingdom, Arthur turns to the idea of justice under law as a last resort. As he does, he sets the stage for the final blow to be struck against his dream. Modred, now, has the means to turn his father's own concept of justice against him. When Modred and Agravaine accuse Guenever of adultery and demand that she be tried in a court of law, Arthur's failure is assured because he finds that he cannot accept the burden of his principles; he indirectly warns Lancelot and Guenever of danger and confesses that he had tried to murder Modred as an infant in a vain attempt to escape the prophecy that his son would become his enemy.

But Arthur is unable to stem the tide of forces moving irrevocably toward the destruction of his kingdom. While he is away on a hunting trip, Lancelot goes to Guenever's bedroom, unknowingly allowing Modred to obtain the evidence needed to convict Guenever of adultery.

When Guenever is sentenced to be burned at the stake, Arthur cannot intervene and remain true to his ideal of justice. When his hope is fulfilled and Lancelot rescues Guenever, Arthur must go to France to lay siege to Lancelot's castle. Even an appeal to the Church in the form of the Pope cannot reconcile the forces of destruction. Although the Pope orders Arthur to take Guenever back and Lancelot to go into exile, Arthur is forced to return to his siege of Lancelot's castle to obtain justice for the murder of Gareth and Gaheris.

At last Arthur is forced to fight for what is left of his once glorious kingdom. In his absence Modred has proclaimed himself king and has announced that he will marry Guenever. At the end of the book Arthur is preparing to go into battle against Modred. But this is not all tragedy. Even in the face of failure, Arthur recalls the noble ideals Merlyn taught him. He realizes that even though he was unsuccessful in putting those ideals into action, the fact that he could make the attempt bodes well for the future. At last he can face the future with a peaceful heart.

Like Malory before him, White leaves the story with an open ending. This is as it should be, for Arthur is legend, and the legend tells of a noble and wise man who tried to institute rule of the good and the just. Malory says that "yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead," and White's ending does not dispute that possibility. Certainly, this is not merely a story of knights and of adventure; it is also a story of ideals and of justice. The implication of the open ending is clear; one attempt to set up a rule of justice may have failed, but justice is not dead.

ORATION ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN

Type of work: Philosophical essay

Author: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494)

First published: 1496

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is a remarkable document, but not for the reason that is sometimes thought. That is, the *Oration*, even though it is an important statement by an influential early Renaissance humanist, is not a proclamation of the worth and glory of worldly life and achievement, nor is it an attack on the medieval world view as such. Pico, in fact, was as much medieval in his outlook as he was anything else, and he was willing to defend the medieval theologians and philosophers from the attacks of his humanist friends.

However, Pico does offer in the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* a more than traditional statement about the nature of man. He was a scholar whose vast erudition included a knowledge of not only Italian, Latin, and Greek, but also Hebrew, Chaldean, and Arabic. He had read widely in several non-Christian traditions of philosophy, and he had come to the conclusion that all philosophy, whether written by Christians, Jews, or pagans, was in basic agreement. Moving from this position, in December of 1486, Pico published in Rome nine hundred theses, and invited all interested scholars to dispute them with him in January, 1487. The *Oration* was to have been his introduction to his defense. Pope Innocent VIII, however, forbade the disputation and appointed a papal commission to investigate the theses; the commission found some of them heretical. Pico tried to defend himself in a published *Apologia*, but his action made matters worse, and for several years he was in conflict with the Church. This conflict was unexpected, and Pico, no conscious rebel, was very much disturbed by it. As a result he became increasingly a religious man, at last becoming a Dominican. The *Oration* was never published in Pico's lifetime, though part of it was used in his *Apologia* to the papal commission.

In form the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* follows the then standard academic,

humanistic, rhetorical pattern. The piece is divided into two parts. The first part presents and deals with the philosophical basis of the speaker; the second part announces and justifies the topics to be disputed. The philosophical first part of the *Oration* begins by praising man; this, as Pico points out, is a common *topos*. However, he immediately rejects the traditional bases for praising man; that is, the medieval view that man's distinction is a function of his unique place at the center of creation, or that he is a microcosm. Pico's own view in the first part of the *Oration* is very complex, but it may be briefly summarized as follows:

Pico accepted the truism that man is the most wonderful of all creations. At the same time he inquired into the reasons why this is so. Some, he said, believed that man is wonderful because he can reason and because he is close to God. But these, he argued, were not the true reasons, for the same qualities may be found among the angels. He then explained his own understanding of why man is truly a wonder, even to the hosts of heaven.

Pico's view was that God was ready to create man only after he had created the world and everything that was in it, the objects of man's contemplation in the divine scheme of things. All else, including the angels, had been given a fixed and immutable form. But man, created with no definite abode or form, was given free will and all of God's creatures to use. Pico claimed also that man is neither heaven nor earth, mortal nor immortal, but free to choose between sinking to an animal level or rising to the divine.

God's great gift to man was for him to have free choice and to be what he wills. If he chooses to be a vegetable, then he will act like a plant; if he chooses to be sensual, he will act like an animal; if he chooses to be rational, he will be saintlike; if he chooses to be intellectual, he will appear like an angel; and if he rejects the lot of all created things, he will draw into the center of his own being and thus

unite his spirit with the divine. Man has this capability of becoming either an animal or more than an angel, and his inconstant nature is his greatest blessing. Therefore it is his duty to seek out the highest level he can obtain, striving to rise above the angels who, fixed in form, cannot surpass themselves and reach the Godhead.

Pico's is an exalted idea of man. Though it is otherworldly in focus and is, thus, in the popular mind at least, not what we think of as the Renaissance, worldly view, it is truly Renaissance in another way; that is, it embraces the position that man is limitless by his very nature, and it sees as a great strength of man that inconstancy of being which had so long been the despair of many Christian dogmatists.

In the second part of his *Oration*, Pico points out that man is assisted in his attempt to achieve the highest form of existence by philosophy. This view explains Pico's own interest in philosophy and also the plan of the disputation that was to follow the *Oration*. Pico says that he must undertake to defend so great a number of theses because he is not an adherent of any one philosopher or school of philosophy. He feels the need to argue for positions drawn from a great variety of sources. He very broadly surveys his nine hundred theses, commenting on the various writers from whom they are drawn. In so doing he displays the full extent of his learning in both Christian and non-Christian writings. As he concludes this longer and more involved second part of his *Oration*, he challenges his readers to

gird up their loins and to plunge joyfully into argument with him as if joining in battle to the sound of a war trumpet.

In examining the second part of the *Oration*, we see that Pico, rejecting the idea that any one philosopher may have a monopoly on final truth, proclaims the idea of the unity of truth. He adopts this position in an attempt to solve the ancient problem of reconciling the great multiplicity and many contradictions of varying philosophical schools. Both ancient and more modern thinkers have adopted the relativistic position and used this philosophical multiplicity to prove there can be no truth or absolute. Pico, however, writing in the tradition of the ancient eclectics and neo-Platonists, assumes that opposing philosophical doctrines share both in error and in insight into universal truth. For him, then, truth is a collection of true statements drawn from various sources. He recognizes some error in different philosophers, but he recognizes some truth in their writings as well.

In this work Pico hoped to winnow out error, to extract various aspects of truth, and to combine them eclectically into a unified statement of truth that would help man take advantage of his freedom to seek the highest form of existence. While this is not an original position, it is humanistic and thus Renaissance in this important respect: it is a justification for the typically humanistic desire to study all ancient writings rather than just those thought to support the medieval Christian tradition of philosophy and theology.

THE ORDEAL OF GILBERT PINFOLD

Type of work: Novel

Author: Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966)

Time: Shortly after World War II

Locale: England and Ceylon

First published: 1957

Principal characters:

GILBERT PINFOLD, a middle-aged writer and country squire

MRS. PINFOLD, his wife

DR. DRAKE, Pinfold's physician

ANGEL, an interviewer for the B.B.C. in real life, but in Pinfold's dreams his chief antagonist
 GONERIL, the dream-Angel's wife, and also an antagonist
 MARGARET, the dream-Angel's sister, who represents a revolt in Pinfold's sexual life
 CAPTAIN STEERFORTH, master of the S.S. *Caliban*, in Pinfold's dreams a part-antagonist
 MRS. SCARFIELD, a passenger on the S.S. *Caliban*

The Odeal of Gilbert Pinfold is the interwoven story of three distinct subjects: the protagonist, a fictitious author and country squire; Mr. Waugh himself, who, the headnote reads, furnished the central experience of the novel from an event in his own life; and England in its uncomfortable recovery from the effects of World War II.

Gilbert Pinfold stands for both Waugh as a person and as an observer of history. He is both man and symbol, a combination of personality and of class. Pinfold is of course intensely English, so much so that he seems at times a mere bundle of peculiarities. He has a traditional English self-regard and a corresponding impermeability to the world at large. Most important, Pinfold represents a class of society and a type of man that were both dated by the mid-century. He is literate, upper class, rural, and Tory. His tastes run to good wine and old furniture. He lives in a network of family, inherited money, and clubs. In short, he displays all the attachments to time and place which are being dissolved by the advent of modernity.

Gilbert Pinfold is a creature of habit and tradition, and he finds it intensely difficult to adjust to the new age of things moneyed and material. His prime interest is the old house he has filled with pictures and books of the kind he admires. He has no concrete interest in politics, only sympathies of a sort dating back some two hundred years. It is important to see that he lives in a decayed and slightly ridiculous version of Imperial England among those whom, once the colonels and governors of an empire, the new way of life has isolated in rural poverty and idiosyncrasy. Before the war his neighbors main-

tained a kind of authentic country grandeur, now they are at the mercy of inflation, fixed incomes, and an atmosphere in which their sense of life is seen as increasingly ineffective and, even worse, comical.

As for Pinfold himself, his strongest feelings are negative. He hates plastics, Picasso, sunbathing, and jazz—everything characteristic of the life around him. A nominal Catholic, he lives sequestered in the English countryside, writing, disliking modernity with detachment and circumspection, isolated by his historical sense. But Mr. Waugh's intention is to show that neither man nor nation may live in this way. What begins as a routinely amusing story of the squirearchy in decline suddenly becomes a story of individual madness and cultural alienation. The importance of Pinfold is not that he is a demi-eccentric, but that he is middle-aged, responsible, a figure of some importance as both man and writer—and that he no longer exerts any force upon his culture. It takes a nightmare, an "ordeal," to awaken him from his long sleep.

For some time, evidently for no reason at all, Pinfold has sunk increasingly into physical and mental torpor. He cannot sleep and he uses pills, potions, and concoctions with increasing recklessness. He cannot think at ease, and he is at the point of drinking the same gargantuan amounts of wine, champagne, beer, and brandy that sent many of his eighteenth century ancestors groaning to their graves. He cannot exercise, and he grows fat, arthritic, gouty, rheumatic. He suffers from the classical discomforts of middle-class Englishmen, the kinds of things utilized for hundreds of years by playwrights to point their comedies and

satires. Yet it is revealed quite soon that there is very little that is comic about his condition. For Pinfold unites to these awkward sufferings of the body an authentic mental and spiritual malaise. He is losing his mind.

Gilbert Pinfold's trauma or nervous breakdown reveals itself in two ways. His body turns useless, a blotched, insensate hulk which is fit only for the nervous ingestion of stimulants. His mind wanders; his memory fails; his writing ability dries up; a full-fledged paranoia embraces his conscious life. In order to regain the humanity he has lost he tries at first to account for what is happening to him in purely habitual terms, and he engages passage on a liner to Ceylon for a vacation. It is the traditional cure: a cruise in the best *ancien* style; a residence in the colonial tropics. But the cruise on the ship fittingly named the *Caliban* turns out to be the crisis of his middle life.

Pinfold is slightly over fifty when he embarks, the same age, roughly, as Dante and Don Quixote. Like them, he seeks a new life, and he makes a desperate affirmation of his need to return to consciousness. Like them, he undergoes a sequence of suffering, enlightenment, and salvation. The suffering or "ordeal" of course comes first. As soon as he comes aboard the *Caliban* he begins to suffer attacks of delusion. He imagines that his fellow passengers are tied together in a conspiracy to embarrass him. He tries at first to make some sense of this impression, to find allies and witnesses of his innocence, but he gives up his search when in his disturbed state of mind it seems to him that everyone on board is his secret enemy. He begins to hear secret conversations, to imagine abominable crimes, and, ultimately, he invents three personalities which commune with him at all times and in every conceivable place. Awake or asleep, drunk or sober, comatose or conscious, he becomes involved in a terrifying four-pointed dialogue.

Pinfold holds the most intimate of his imaginary conversations with Margaret,

the spirit of a sexuality both corrupting and redemptive. His life has been a retreat from sexual commitment: when he was younger, he was accustomed to visit bordellos in order to taste all the flavors of the exotic. In England he was rather confined in his affections. Since their marriage he has been faithful to his wife. Because of his formal obedience to the church he has developed what passes for virtuous conduct, without any inclination to commit grave sins. His personality, in short, is of the kind to which meaningful errors are not appropriate; he has lived a life of virtue more or less from the motives of a vegetable. Margaret is the sensual nightmare who awakens him to the discovery that the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom. It is perhaps symbolic that even in the misty half-consciousness of his delusions he is unable to play his part. Margaret arrives on the wings of his desires, but he falls asleep to Goneril's taunt that he is shamming because he is impotent. The connotations are much more than sexual.

Angel, the chief of Pinfold's tormentors, is an incarnation of the new England. He is a lower-class Mephistopheles, material, joyless, clever, spiteful. He is resentful without being passionate and ugly without inspiring the slightest awe. As such, he is perfectly calculated to play the counterpart to Pinfold's aging cultural impotence. His ministrations finally culminate in the attractive advice to end the "ordeal" by suicide. The moment of Pinfold's enlightenment begins when he rejects Angel and takes on the pain of continuance. He is hounded off the *Caliban* after that: to Egypt, the Near East, and from there all the way to Ceylon. Yet he continues obstinate, a kind of combination John Bull and Don Quixote, refusing to hand over the keys of his being. His redemption comes when Angel, on the verge of desperation, offers a mode of co-existence: if Pinfold will simply keep his madness to himself he will never again hear from the demons. The proposition is attractive, but with

characteristic tenacity Pinfold refuses, not on a metaphysical basis, but simply because blackmail revolts him and acquiescence is not something a gentleman puts up with. He reveals the situation with dull honesty to his wife, and the voices suddenly stop forever. To point a moral may ruin a story, but to ignore one is

much more serious, and may ruin an idea. Pinfold recovers because he has in him a certain ineradicable residue of life and belief. He shows it, as the book comes to a close, by sitting down to his typewriter to write a story called *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*.

OUT OF MY LIFE AND THOUGHT

Type of work: Autobiography

Author: Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)

First published: 1931

Few men during the twentieth century have achieved the international renown and esteem given to Albert Schweitzer. There is probably no literate person in the world who is not somewhat cognizant of his work among the African natives. Yet, surprisingly few people are aware of the man behind the legend: future generations will more than likely remember Schweitzer, not as a doctor or humanitarian, but as a scholar and philosopher. This is the Schweitzer, the artist, the man of letters, depicted in *Out of My Life and Thought*.

Schweitzer was established as a theologian, a philosopher, and a musician long before he had any thoughts of becoming a doctor. In fact, it was because of his appreciation for the happiness he received at being able to develop his ideas and knowledge that he felt the necessity to give humanity some of the benefits with which he had been blessed.

Born on January 14, 1875, at Kaysersberg in Upper Alsace, Schweitzer was the second child of Louis Schweitzer, a clergyman who, a few weeks after Albert's birth, moved to Günsbach. There Albert spent an enjoyable youth with his three sisters and one brother. At the age of five, he began taking music lessons from his father. By the age of nine, he was playing for church services in Günsbach. At ten, he entered the gymnasium at Mülhausen under the guardianship of his great-uncle. He was chiefly interested in

history and the natural sciences, though he continued his study of music and became infatuated with the music of Bach.

In 1893 Schweitzer passed his final examination in the First Form, and received instruction in the organ from the Parisian organist, Charles Widor. At the end of October, 1893, he became a student at Strasbourg University. Here he took up the two subjects of theology and philosophy. In April of 1894 Schweitzer began his year of compulsory military service, but was allowed to continue his studies at the same time.

His years at the university passed quickly with his studies and music occupying all of his time, and in May of 1898 he passed his first theological examination. The following summer he devoted his time entirely to the study of philosophy. He was then given a theological scholarship and, following the advice of one of his teachers, determined to work on his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. After a stay in Paris he returned to Strasbourg, where in July of 1899 he took his degree in philosophy. Afterward he set to work on his theological licentiate, which he completed that same year. In December, 1899, he was given a post as a minister.

In 1900, inspired by his dissertation for his theological licentiate, Schweitzer began to write *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, and in 1903 took a position as principal at the Theological College.

After the book appeared in 1906, he was given immediate recognition as a theological scholar. While busy with this work, he had already begun the writing of a book in French on the nature of Bach's art for the students at the Paris Conservatoire. This work, *J. S. Bach*, was published in 1905.

In 1905 Schweitzer enrolled as a medical student; he believed that he was justified in living till he was thirty for science and art in order to devote himself from that time forward to the direct service of humanity. As it later turned out, however, he was able to do both.

In 1911 Schweitzer took the state medical examination, and in 1913 went to Lambaréné, Africa, with his wife, whom he had married in 1912. At a mission sponsored by the Paris Missionary Society he established his hospital. The venture was highly successful until September of 1917, when war interrupted his work at the mission and he and his wife were ordered to a camp at Garaison in the Pyrenees as prisoners of war. There they stayed until the spring of 1918, when they were transferred to St. Remy.

After their release in an exchange of prisoners in 1919, Schweitzer returned to Strasbourg. There he obtained positions as a doctor and as a minister. Later that year he was invited to lecture in Sweden, where he earned enough money to pay the debts he had acquired in Africa. During the next five years he continued to write and give lectures and organ recitals until he left again for Africa in 1924.

During his seven years of absence the hospital had completely deteriorated, but by the fall of 1925 he had managed to rebuild it. Later he moved it to another site in order to provide better facilities for the increasing number of patients.

By 1927 the hospital was sufficiently staffed for Schweitzer to spend two years in Europe, traveling to give lectures and recitals and to spend his spare time finishing his book on the Apostle Paul. In 1929 he returned to Africa, remaining there until 1931, when he went to Eu-

rope to deliver a lecture in commemoration of Goethe's death. The years that followed were spent mostly in Africa, though until his death he made frequent trips to Europe to lecture and to receive honorary degrees.

The events of Schweitzer's life are, by themselves, sufficient to merit the praise and awe of the world. Certainly few people have lived life so fully. Nevertheless, the thought of the man is perhaps even more important.

As a theologian Schweitzer was not satisfied to study the ideas that had prevailed before. He set out, first in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, published in 1906, to increase and deepen the value of Christianity by examining the significance of its theological structure. He attempted to give a new understanding to the character of Christ and to the spread of Christianity. He later criticized the modern institution of Christianity, but, more important, he strove to give what had become confused, in modern thought, a new significance and importance in the context of modern civilization. It was always his belief that the importance of Christianity is the pragmatic application of the simple teachings of Jesus, and in his sermons and his own actions he followed this belief.

As a philosopher, Schweitzer has attempted to deal with the application of philosophy rather than with a concern for pedantic scholarship. After a tremendous amount of thought and work, he chose as his premise the belief that the essential element in an ethical civilization is a reverence for life, spiritual and physical. Other than the work on Kant's philosophy which he did for his degree, he published the first two volumes of *Civilization and Ethics*, his work on the philosophy of civilization, in the spring of 1923. In his later years he continued to lecture on philosophy and received several honorary degrees in this field.

Schweitzer was internationally known as a musician, taught by masters. After publication in French of the book on the

art of Bach, he was asked to translate the work into German. Not satisfied with a mere translation of the work, he proceeded to rewrite the entire book, increasing its length from 455 pages to 844. In 1906 his pamphlet titled *Art of Organ Building and Organ Playing in Germany and France* appeared. Schweitzer was greatly concerned with the lack of quality found in the modern organs that were replacing older ones that had been constructed by masters. Thus, he began a campaign to save the old organs and frequently succeeded. Little by little attention was given to his concept of reform in organ building and he became an accepted authority on the subject. His ability as a performer, as was previously mentioned, enabled him to finance much of his medical work in the African jungle.

It was as a physician, however, that Schweitzer became a world-known figure. Like his other areas of endeavor, his being a doctor was purely a practical measure. With no thoughts of becoming a hero, he recognized what he believed was his duty and undertook it with en-

thusiasm. He had no desire to bring European civilization to the natives, for he did not believe that most of what modern man thinks of as civilization is of great worth; he merely saw an opportunity to put into practice the religion of love which he found in the teachings of Jesus. Medicine, then, was not actually his calling, but rather a tool which he could use in order to live a fuller life.

During one visit to Britain in 1932, Schweitzer received four honorary degrees: one in theology from Oxford, two others in theology and music from the University of Edinburgh, and a fourth in laws from St. Andrews. His world-wide acclaim was probably unsurpassed by any figure of this century. It is unusual for a man to have the mental and physical potential that Schweitzer possessed. It is remarkable for such a person to develop his capacities in so many directions. The most outstanding quality of the life and thought of Albert Schweitzer, however, is that in each of his fields his primary concern was always the betterment of humanity.

PALE FIRE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Vladimir Nabokov (1899-)

Time: The present

Locale: New Wye, Appalachia, U.S.A., and "Zembla"

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

JOHN SHADE, an American poet

SYBIL SHADE, his wife

HAZEL SHADE, their daughter

DR. CHARLES KINBOTE, a Zemblan scholar

JACOB GRADUS, an assassin

Few of Vladimir Nabokov's novel-reading public know his peculiar gifts for learning and poetry. Fewer still can have recognized *Pale Fire* as a strikingly successful synthesis of these gifts with his undeniable talent for the novel. An incredibly and uniquely rich book, this satiric comedy of criticism was the victim of many indolently obtuse and laboriously brilliant reviews when it appeared.

The theme of *Pale Fire* is the increasingly familiar idea that the significance of art, and of life, rests not upon "text" but on "texture," not upon any supposed integral validity of thoughts, actions, and memories, but rather upon the correspondences and coincidences that a civilized human mind can find or create among thoughts, actions, and memories. In its clear and steady focus upon this

central theme the book is almost neoclassically "decorous." Its most recurrent image becomes, with redoubled propriety, the Mirror, that ideal reflector and agent of coincidence, that paradigm of neoclassical aesthetic theory.

The central characters of Nabokov's *Pale Fire* have a strange relationship between them. As the book opens, John Shade, a distinguished American poet, has just been murdered. The narrator is evidently engaged in editing the last work of Shade and interpreting his life. It appears from the nature of Kinbote's editorial commentary that he has imposed on the last work of Shade a completely insane superstructure of meaning. No matter what the poem of Shade says, the narrator-editor persists in finding within the poem incredibly minute and esoteric accounts of historical matters. Kinbote is not a native American, but an emigrant from the fictitious kingdom of Zembla, a nation within the Soviet sphere of interest. He believes that *Pale Fire*, Shade's last and greatest work, is really a documentary account of the kingdom of Zembla in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Kinbote is a parody of that very popular anti-hero of recent fiction, the professor. Both he and Shade teach at a small college in "New Wye," which is evidently a composite of all the failings of second-rate and private American institutions of learning. The students and the faculty of the college are described with suitable withering sarcasm, and in that respect this is an orthodox campus novel. What makes it different is the lunacy of the narrator and the grotesque mingling of story lines by Nabokov.

One aspect of the story, which traces the recent life of Shade, proceeds on the matter-of-fact biographical level. It is consistently countered by fantasies woven by the editor, who sees in every word of the material he is editing a reference to his own life. This view is further complicated by a typically Nabokovian scheme of interaction, with the result that the

historical events so continually alluded to are twisted out of recognizable shape. Not only does Professor Kinbote believe that the poem *Pale Fire* is about his homeland of Zembla; he is madly convinced that he is in fact the last king of Zembla, and that Shade had died as a result of a murky conspiracy on the part of the "Extremist" party of the country.

Rational and moving, appealing to both heart and head, the text of *Pale Fire* is a great poem in its context and at least a good one out of it; Nabokov's skill as a poet makes one accept quite without the usual fideistic strain the notion that John Shade is a genius.

The poem, standing at the heart of the story, serves a double function. Most evidently, it furnishes the straightforward biographical account of Shade's life which is to be confused in the psychotic mind of its editor. In this sense it is the material of comedy. But the poem itself is a statement of considerable feeling about events in the life of the poet which endow it with a deep sense of tragedy. This poem is primarily about the suicide of Shade's daughter, and Nabokov plays off all of the complications of its interpretation against one another. For example, when Shade is being most revealing about the bitterness of his loss his editor chooses to interpret the lines as referring to personages in Zembla who are not only quite fictitious but whose imaginary character cannot possibly relate to the lines in question. When the poet does refer to a concrete image or a situation which must be treated as purely factual, the editor, in a splendid burst of academic madness, takes up each reference, no matter how trifling or ephemeral, as a personal challenge to his powers of definition. The reader requires not only some sophistication but also a good deal of patience.

If the poem mentions the phrase "wood duck," for example, the psychotic editor embarks on a naturalistic excursus about the life, habits, and ecological condition of the species. He gives us the color of the creature and its habits, in fact a

whole biography of the bird. Characteristically, he also adds some quite mad comments which are totally extraneous to the brief appearance of this literary reference. Much of the book, in fact, is devoted to the astonishing *non sequiturs* of the imagination which Kinbote is capable of achieving. He is, in short, the very figure of the sterile academician, a figure worthy of comparable standing with the mindless professorial puppets of Bernard Malamud, Randall Jarrell, Saul Bellow, and others.

Perhaps the greatest irony of *Pale Fire* is that the poem itself is decidedly a literary achievement. If there is a great deal of comedy to be produced by the conflict of editor and material editorialized, there is also a great deal of pathos. The poem tells the familiar story of the American imagination: youth spent in terrible isolation from the herd; manhood an experience of physical and intellectual awakening; maturity a kind of tragedy. Throughout the story the poem is played off against the visions and memories of its doddering editor. If Shade writes of his love for his wife and daughter, and exposes this love in language of almost clinical accuracy, the editor adds a subtext of his own. His own story, brought out in the footnotes to Shade's poem, is a sordid hash of homosexual experiences and desires. When Shade writes of his wife and their forty-year love affair, Kinbote unburdens himself in the sickliest language imaginable of his attraction to young boys. Where Shade abandons himself to remorse over the life and death of his daughter, the editor abandons himself to a series of ambiguous reveries about his life.

Throughout the story there are allusions to yet another complicated strand of actions. The man who murders Shade is called Gradus, and at regular intervals in the novel an account is given of his wanderings from Zembla to the United States. Gradus is an appallingly ignorant man, scarcely literate in the language of Zembla and hopelessly at a loss in that of

any other country. Yet somehow, inexorably, Gradus makes his way west from Zembla, and arrives in the United States to accomplish his mission. In the eyes of "New Wye" alone Gradus appears to be a madman who has killed Shade for reasons accidental. This, in fact, may be the case, yet Nabokov allows another possibility. The narrator, Professor Kinbote, is profoundly convinced that Gradus is an agent of the "Extremist" party of Zembla and that Shade is only his accidental victim. Kinbote invents a mysterious and complicated history of Gradus. After the death of Shade, shot down on his own lawn, he rejoices that he himself has been spared. Yet the book ends upon an open question. The last "commentaries" of the editor leave unanswered the question of why Shade has died. Has it been an accident? Or has it been a conspiracy? The book closes without clear revelation. Kinbote is either a mad professor or a king in disguise. Gradus is either a mindless psychotic or a purposeful assassin. And Shade is either the victim of a ludicrous accident or the man who has taken upon himself the danger of befriending a king. Nabokov does not resolve these issues. Nor does he resolve the relationship of the poem *Pale Fire* to the events of the story.

This novel appears to have as its point the depiction of ultimate relativism. The events are clouded in mystery, and the characters are finally left without full identities. The reader realizes that the heroine of the poem *Pale Fire* may have killed herself or may have accidentally drowned. One learns that Shade may have been sincerely broken by her death or perhaps only affected in that deepest part of himself, the ego. And one discovers that Professor Kinbote is either a royal exile or a psychopath. The book resolves none of these issues. On the contrary, it holds them up for repeated and endless examination. The events take place against a historical background which does *not* give them any clarity; in this respect the book is a direct reaction and

commentary on the whole course of recent historical fiction.

Working out of a Russian tradition that is unknown to most Americans, working with talents whose scope is al-

most equally unknown, Nabokov alone of all contemporary writers is capable of having produced a book so sublimely ridiculous, so unridiculously sublime.

PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER

Type of work: Three short novels

Author: Katherine Anne Porter (1890-)

Times: *Old Mortality*, 1885-1912; *Noon Wine*, 1836-1905; *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, 1918

Locales: New Orleans, Texas, Colorado

First published: 1939

Pale Horse, Pale Rider is an important book in the literary career of Katherine Anne Porter. Following, as it did, her highly esteemed first collection of short stories, *Flowering Judas*, this collection composed of three short novels marked an advance in technical interest and resources. It demonstrated clearly the artist's ability to handle the expansive complexity of forms larger than the conventional short story and, thus, offered the promise of exploration of the even larger area of the full-length novel, a promise which was finally to be realized with the appearance of *Ship of Fools* in 1962. At the same time, paradoxically, the artistic success of the forms in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is so complete that it is hard to imagine, in abstraction from the fact of *Ship of Fools*, what a novel by Katherine Anne Porter would be. For she matches the weight and density of many fine conventional novels in her shorter form. For a long time there were those critics who did not believe that *Ship of Fools* would ever be finished. The superb achievement of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is one of the reasons why this was so.

One should begin by acknowledging the real daring of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. The short story of conventional length is difficult enough to place and publish, and a collection of short stories is, in fact, a rare thing. It is probably easier to publish a collection of poems than it is a book of stories. There are many reasons for this condition, some of them soundly eco-

nomic, others the whimsical rationale of publishers; but the fact is that the short story collection has been and remains an unwanted and rejected child throughout this century. The rule is and has been that novelists, those with enough commercial success or literary prestige or both to merit the consideration of their publishers, are permitted to publish a book of stories from time to time, usually after the fact of a novel or occasionally first, in advance, upon the firm promise and possibility of a novel. The exceptions to the rule in this century are very few and very far between. And so it is quite remarkable that *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* ever appeared. There could have been small encouragement for Miss Porter to produce anything except a novel. Moreover, the short novel as a form is even more rare in this country than a collection of short stories; for its difficulties begin at the common marketplace. The magazines, which will from time to time publish a serious short story among their lighter and more conventional fiction, have never been willing to surrender the space necessary for the long story or short novel. The choice of the form, then, whether at the outset or as a result of the demands of the material in the process of making, represents a major decision on the part of the artist. The odds are enormously against his creation ever seeing the light of day. In the face of such pressure and such an element of risk, it is no wonder that the form of the short novel has been largely

ignored by our writers. It is a wonder and a triumph that Miss Porter not only created exemplary models of the form, but also managed to overcome all the odds so that these are now simply and beautifully a part of our literary heritage.

From the beginning, Katherine Anne Porter has been accepted and acknowledged as a master stylist. While this view may be true, it has certainly been misleading. Taxonomy, the name of the human game of classification, seems to be an essential part of our consciousness. It is a great strength that permits us to think and relate; yet it is also a dangerous weakness in that the rigid and unquestioning exercise of this power can quickly lead to non-thinking, to the comfortable, narcotic illusion that a label has a life of its own as valid as the thing which is so named and tagged. The arts are difficult enough to think about and have not been spared from this kind of danger. To call attention to Katherine Anne Porter's style is a useful observation, but it is rather like describing an oak tree exclusively in terms of the shape and color of its leaves. Moreover, associatively, emphasis on style tends to imply virtuosity for its own sake and a certain absence of content; with the result that the critic need not come to terms with content at all. In the case of Katherine Anne Porter this habit or cliché of critics is particularly disappointing. She writes very well indeed, sentence by sentence, but it is the supreme virtue of her style that it is designed not to call attention to itself, but to fit hand-in-glove the matter and content of her stories, to carry the weight and to suggest the depth of complexity without once interrupting the magic spell which gives fiction its reality. All her virtuosity is at the service of her story and her characters. It is easy enough for a writer to divert the reader away from content and character by dazzling and intriguing verbal performance. Katherine Anne Porter has never chosen that way. Her method has been the more difficult one; clearly the reader is intended to weigh the story

in a total and meaningful sense and not to stop short with admiration for its surface and decoration. What she has to "say" is important and it is a critical mistake to ignore this fact.

The three short novels composing *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider* are arranged in an order or structure to make a larger, single statement and effect, and each demonstrates a different way of handling the short novel. The first, *Old Mortality*, is in three separate parts and is, in a sense, a smaller version of the whole book. It is superficially a "romantic" tale of turn of the century America. Part I is set in the shifting, complex world of a large family, gossip and the tall tales of the past being its imitative form. The point of view, established but carefully held undifferentiated at this stage, is of the two young sisters, Maria and Miranda, and the real concern is the romance and tragedy of their beautiful Aunt Amy. A great deal, the whole substance of what might have been a romantic novel of the period, is packed into a few pages, filtered through the consciousness of the two young girls; and yet it all seems leisurely, even digressive, as it should. Describing the way the family passed on its own history, Miss Porter is able at once to give a clue to her own method in this section and to indicate the flaw at the heart of her family's, and our, history, a romantic commitment of the heart and the imagination to the past.

In Part II, Maria and Miranda, are young schoolgirls in a New Orleans convent, now characterized as quite different though still seeing the world together; simply reacting differently to it. Here there is a single, central event, their meeting with Uncle Gabriel, the dashing figure of the tragic legend of Aunt Amy, a confrontation with reality. Here, beautifully executing her chosen point of view, Miss Porter avoids the easy way out, of letting this event have a shattering and instant impact on the two young girls. The impact is implied. We see what they see and feel what they feel, but

we are not invited, as we might be in the much more conventional story of youthful disillusionment, to shatter the credible spell of their youth. Nor is the romantic past neatly (and falsely) discredited. It is modified. In Part II, the center of consciousness is Miranda, a young woman now, going home to the funeral of Uncle Gabriel and sharing her train ride by accident with the practical and worldly Cousin Eva, who had always been the antithesis of Aunt Amy. Here Miranda is capable, up to a point, of judging and evaluating the events of the past and able to decide to break with it. But the story, which has evolved and emerged as the story of Miranda growing up, is subtly and carefully shown to be incomplete. For Miss Porter, unlike many contemporary writers, is not willing to settle for the simplistic "truth" of young idealism. Miranda's resolution at the end changes nothing as finally as she imagines, yet is in itself an inevitable change.

In "Old Mortality" certain basic conditions are firmly established which will inform the character of the whole book. The subjects, the conflicts, will be past and present, "romance" and "reality," a history of how our times and our world changed and became what they are. The larger theme is change and mutability. All these things are to be shown through character. Characters will grow and change credibly and with ever-increasing dimension. The framework will be within the terms of the conventional serious story, but these conventions will be given renewed vigor and life; for precisely at the point where the conventional response or reaction could end the story and be a solution, the artist will give the story an unexpected resonance by a new tightening of the screw. Her stories will not "end," then, but project a sense of life going on and echo afterward in the readers' mind, an effect which is artistically consistent with her theme and subject of change.

The second of the short novels, the widely known *Noon Wine*, stands in ap-

parently sharp contrast to *Old Mortality*. In time it parallels the first two parts of the other and, in fact, stands in relation to *Old Mortality* much as the second part of that story does to the first. It is a rural tragedy, plain and harshly realistic, the other side of the coin of our nineteenth century past. Here there are two young people who grow up, too, grubby, small, tow-haired, but they are not involved in the consciousness of the story. Apparently omniscient, the story gradually settles into the tragedy of Mr. Thompson, as unlikely a tragic figure as can be imagined, one who for a large part of the story is tagged with characteristics which are conventionally unsympathetic in modern writing. In the end, he changes in the reader's view and estimation, his awful suicide becoming tragic, but not through the usual trick of the revelation of something new or unknown about his character. His character evolves, grows as things happen to him cumulatively, just as the character of Miranda grew and changed in *Old Mortality*, though in a rude and realistic setting and without the benefits of great intelligence or sensibility. Taken together the two short novels say: From these roots we the living have grown to maturity. Both are our heritage and each is more subtly different than conventional ways of thinking about our past would allow. The result is, structurally, to focus attention forward on the final tale, the title story, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

This story combines elements of both the previous stories. There is a real tragic romance, the love of Adam and Miranda, in many ways a parallel of the grand romance of Gabriel and Amy, in part a retelling of the Adam and Eve legend. And there is plenty of the harsh reality of a country at war, in the closing days of World War I, and in the midst of the raging influenza epidemic which marked the end of that war. That sickness takes the life of Adam and almost kills Miranda as well. The story ends with the end of the war and Miranda leaving the hospital, "cured." The final image again

projects a future, but now a strangely bleak and bitter one. All things have changed. Part of the subtlety of this story lies in the author's ability to use the war, conventionally, as the end of something of the old order and the loss of something indefinable from the American spirit, and yet to do this within the context of the home front. The raging epidemic, at first as seemingly remote as the bloody fields of France, gradually becomes part of the whole sickness which inflamed the world and destroyed so much. Miranda emerges as much a war casualty as any shell-shocked veteran.

The three short novels of *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider* are related and designed to give a rich and complex social history. Miss Porter is not often credited with being a social historian as well as a fine craftsman of prose. Perhaps the reason is that she is only indirectly concerned with politics and so those critics whose social vision is conditioned by their political views cannot grant the truth of her grand theme. But politics is a two-dimensional enterprise, a game of "the image." Katherine Anne Porter's fictional art is based upon the flesh and spirit of character, and none of her characters remains an "image" for long. The social history of *Ship of Fools* or *The Leaning Tower*, for example, is evident; and it is equally present in *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*. But in a

larger sense social history is, however complex, merely part of her design. Social history becomes, by the examples of recurring and parallel events, much more than chronology. It becomes a stage where human beings act out their lives. The scenes change, but the human heart and all its mystery does not. Mutability is a fact of life, but it is not life. Her deepest concern is with people, with character, and in this compassionate and always honest concern she joins the ranks of the very few great artists of fiction. *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*, her three short and related novels, would guarantee her that place among the few had she never written another line.

What remains to be said is that there is something radically wrong with our working definition of "the novel" if it does not include a book composed and arranged as this one is, able to do more and say more than many weighty works twice the total length. In her rhetoric there is great respect for the reader. She engages the reader's imagination and lets it work too. The result is a highly condensed fiction which does not seem so because of the richness of echo she has managed to suggest and evoke. There is nothing small about her work. Its aims are the grandest to which a writer can aspire. Its glory is the remarkable and daring achievement of those aims.

THE PALM-WINE DRINKARD

Type of work: Novel
 Author: Amos Tutuola (1920-)
 Time: Not specified
 Locale: The West African Bush
 First published: 1952

Principal characters:

THE PALM-WINE DRINKARD, a young man
 HIS WIFE, whom he rescues from a ghost
 FAITHFUL-MOTHER, who helps them in the Bush
 HIS TAPSTER, whose death provokes the Drinkard's search
 DEATH, captured by the Drinkard
 THE COMPLETE GENTLEMAN, a ghost
 THE HUNGRY CREATURE, an omnivorous ghost
 DRUM,
 SONG, and
 DANCE, a trio of helpful ghosts

It would be difficult to find another literary occasion like the publication of Amos Tutuola's first novel. Perhaps Phillis Wheatley's debut with *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1773 is the nearest parallel of publication coming from a most unexpected source, an African Negro. But Phillis Wheatley, like American Negro writers since and those who have found their English voices in West and South Africa and the West Indies, was literate. Tutuola is not; there must be many thousands of essays and themes written by African schoolchildren in English which bear a closer resemblance to Tutuola than his novel bears to any other in English. Tutuola's, however, is the only such African writing to be published outside Africa, and only he seems able to exploit the vein, though others in Nigeria have tried. Once the unique style was established by *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, however, there seems little point in continuing to produce such novels, as Tutuola has done up to a few years ago. Much more significant writing seems to have come out of Africa and the West Indies in more conventional form, leaving Tutuola a unique exhibit of uninhibited English.

In a note attached to the first edition published in the United States, Tutuola describes his own life in a modified form of his narrative style. Apart from the extraordinary events in it, such as the hatred he meets from his foster mother, it is apparent that three factors led to the composition of his first work: a fairly low level of literacy in English which was sufficient, however, to get him into the West African Air Corps as a coppersmith; his wartime experiences; and the stirring nationalism of postwar years all over Africa. Similar conditions, but usually involving highly literate writers, occurred in South Africa and in the West Indies, and from both areas came new writers who in the late 1950's were sufficiently prominent in English publishing to be thought of as a school or movement, and who have played a considerable part in demolishing the "negritude" concept of

French African and West Indian writers. Nigerian writers appeared slightly later and the first of them was Tutuola. But he has not joined or been joined by his fellow Nigerian writers, and he remains a solitary example of semi-English writing for which there is no exact parallel anywhere in the world.

But there is more to Tutuola than that, and the true quality of his work is not to be found in his anthropological or sociological significance, as some critics have suggested. That is to say that Tutuola's significance, not only for Africa, lies not in his undoubted reworking of Yoruba folk myths, nor in the fact that one may be able to use his novels to understand the "African" mind. Apart from certain peculiar materials, both the form and content of his work should, after the first impact, be reasonably familiar to the Western European mind.

Tutuola's method is abstract narrative, usually found in dream or fantasy in European literature, where some normal things happen amid others which are impossible. Alice, for instance, falls into a hole in the ground (but a rabbit hole) but not at the rate prescribed for falling bodies. Similarly, the *Palm-Wine Drinkard* and his wife receive quite realistic presents when they leave the Faithful-Mother, then suddenly find themselves going through a door which is also a tree and opens into the Bush. Magic is probably a better term for this nonrealism, and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is full of it.

The story line of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is simplicity itself. The narrator is a "drinkard" because he drinks two hundred and twenty-five kegs of palm-wine daily, a habit that is drastically curtailed when his tapster dies. He sets out to search for the tapster in Deads' Town, finds him after a number of adventures, including marriage, and returns to his home town to rescue the inhabitants from a great famine (hence printed as FAM-INE) with the help of a magic egg given him by the tapster. All of Tutuola's later works follow the same pattern which was

once called picaresque but is now called the myth of the journey or quest.

The Bush dominates all Tutuola's work, and by his account it is a horrible place where anything can happen. Six adventures occur rapidly on the way to the Deads' Town. The Drinkard starts off equipped with powerful *juju* to protect him and he needs it all in the initiatory tests he first meets. He must, for instance, capture Death and solve the riddle of the complete Gentleman who returns his borrowed parts on the way home from the market until he rejoins a colony of skulls. Here the Drinkard rescues a lady and marries her; their son springs from her thumb. If the reader remembers a variety of myths—the noosing of the Sun-God, the Gorgon's head, the miraculous birth of Sin from Satan's head in *Paradise Lost*—nothing in Tutuola's fiction should surprise him. Similar adventures follow when the couple escape from their terrible child and travel through the Bush to Wraith-Island Town, Unreturnable Heaven's Town, Red-Town, and on to Deads' Town. Generally they fight their way through an incredible series of obstacles but they are assisted by Faithful-Mother and by the trio, Drum, Song, Dance. Two further adventures remain on the way home. They are swallowed by the Hungry Creature and they meet the Mountain-Creatures. Even after they arrive home there is FAMINE to contend with, but the tapster's magic egg feeds the whole world. One last act remains,

taking a sacrifice to Heaven to signify the Land's submission to Heaven in the dispute which caused the famine. After this task has been accomplished, it rains for three months. One can see the traces of Christian symbolism here.

The actual details are more strange. There is first of all a certain kind of magic that grows repetitive; certainly in Tutuola's later work it affects bodily appearances, moves with incredible speed, and proliferates its effects monstrously. Second, each town in the Bush is like any other except for one marked difference which gives it its name. Third, there is an amplitude of dirt, blood, snakes, insects, bones, smells, ugliness, and deformity that passes from the grotesque to the sickening. Tutuola, it is suggested, can either be studied as a whole or simply dipped into; just as all his novels amount to one series of Bush adventures, so any one adventure is very like another. One does not get anywhere in Tutuola; having gone into the Bush, one can only fight one's way out again.

But much the same can be said of any set of adventures. What, for example, is the significance of Odysseus' adventures except that they help to explain his long absence? We are not likely to find a meaning in the Drinkard's adventures in the Bush, but the book is still worth reading in order to see what can happen to the English language at the hands of experimenters such as Tutuola.

THE PASSIONS OF THE SOUL

Type of work: Philosophy

Author: René Descartes (1596-1650)

First published: 1649

René Descartes was a man who made of his life a quest for certainty, a quest which led him to the discovery of a new approach to knowledge. This method he summarized in his twenty-one *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*. In *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes, late in his

life, turned his attention to the human emotions; this book is the result of his applications of his rational method to an analysis of the causes, varieties, and significance of emotions. Descartes wrote this study during the winter of 1645-1646; it was not published, however, until a short

time before his death in 1650. During his lifetime Descartes' books had only small sales and were a source of disappointment to their author. But under the prodding of friends and royal patrons, including Queen Christina of Sweden and Princess Elizabeth of the Palatine, he finally agreed to the publication of this, the last book to appear before his death.

Descartes saw mind and body as being completely distinct; he also saw that sense perception requires an interaction of mind and body. He came to believe that the emotions, as well as sense perception, were the result of interaction between the body and the mind. The causes of the emotions, or, as he called them, the passions, were not, he came to believe, solely in the brain but in all parts of the body, insofar as the various parts of the body serve for the production of blood and what he called the animal spirits. These animal spirits he believed to be very subtle portions of the blood, material bodies of extreme minuteness, which move very quickly through the body and are produced, for the most part, in the brain. The animal spirits, as well as perceptions, can cause the actual movements of the body, thought Descartes. The seat of the soul he located in the pineal gland, between the two hemispheres of the brain; the spirits move from the pineal gland, he believed, through the nerves, act upon the animal spirits already in the body's system, and thus cause movements in the muscular and skeletal portions of the body.

The first part of Descartes' study, consisting of fifty "articles," or paragraphs, discusses the physiology of man, explains the seat of the soul, and discusses the general nature of the passions, or emotions. In this section of the book Descartes concludes that both desires and emotions proceed from the soul, noting that while some desires are the result of the body others are the result of the soul, such as the desire to love God. In this section, too, Descartes tries to show why he believes that every soul, despite the

degrees of strength in souls, can exercise absolute control over the emotions of the particular human being. Such power to control the individual is, of course, a logical necessity if the individual is to be held responsible for his thoughts, emotions, and acts.

Because he was a rationalist, Descartes believed that to analyze and to understand the passions is a first step in being able to control them. Therefore, the second part of *The Passions of the Soul* is an examination of the emotions. He enumerates and analyzes a long list of passions, but he suggests that there are six basic, or primitive, passions from which the others derive; the six he lists are wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness. Other passions, claims Descartes, are species of these six or combinations of them. He suggests that the utility of the passions is that they fortify and perpetuate thoughts in the soul which it ought to preserve, thoughts which might disappear if they were not strengthened by emotion. Two ways exist, however, in which the emotions can be detrimental: one is that thoughts can be fortified more than is necessary or desirable; the other is that thoughts unworthy of retention by the soul are fortified, and so retained, by emotion. For example, maintains Descartes, wonder can be marvelous in inclining the individual to study the sciences. On the other hand, he points out, as we progress in the study of science we must replace mere wonder with special reflection. For unless we learn to reflect upon what is new in our experience, rather than simply wonder about it, we shall, suggests Descartes, have finally only a blind curiosity which leads us from novelty to novelty without ever acquiring any real knowledge about anything; things of no importance can then come to arrest one's attention as readily as those things which ought to have careful investigation.

Part two of Descartes' study consists of ninety-eight "articles," or paragraphs. In Article XC, "That which springs from

delight," he discusses the desire human beings have for another person, of the opposite sex. He notes that at a certain age nature causes us to entertain certain impressions in the brain that an individual of the other sex is the other half of a whole, of which we are half. This inclination for another individual, which seems the greatest of all imaginable goods at a certain time of life, is usually called love, though it is really a delight, says Descartes, and he notes that it has strange effects upon human beings and that these effects provide the principal materials for poets and writers of romances.

Having explained the six primitive passions as the genera, of which the other passions are species, using biological terminology, Descartes goes on in Part Three of *The Passions of the Soul* to discuss specific passions, such as esteem and disdain. He acknowledges that these two names often signify passionless opinions, but he points out that these opinions, which are reflections of value judgments, are often the sources of emotions to which we have not given specific names. For example, in this section he treats of (in addition to disdain and esteem) envy, pity, jealousy, anger, gratitude, and impudence. Part of the treatment is the result of observation, as in Article CC. In that article he notes that persons who grow pale in anger are usually to be feared more than those who become flushed while angry. Those who flush, he suggests, use expression and words to show their anger, while those who become pale hold themselves in and make up their minds to vengeance at a later time.

Throughout this section there are strong ethical undertones, for Descartes always writes from the standpoint that the soul can at least learn to control the emotions and the actions of the body which flow from them. This ethical side to his work is made explicit in the last two articles, Article CCXI, "A general remedy against the passions," and CCXII, "That it is on them alone that all the

good and evil of this life depends." The best reason for his explanation of the passions, says Descartes, is that knowing them helps us to control and conquer the emotions, and thus enables us to fear them less. By understanding the natural faults that arise from the interaction of the mind and body we can learn to overcome those faults. Thus we can learn, he suggests, how to enable the soul to control the body in such a way that the evils which the passions cause are bearable. Further, we may even learn to find joy in our emotions.

Such an analysis of the passions and their causes is, from a historical viewpoint, at least, a strongly scientific approach to emotions and the ethical problems related to them. But, as in all his thought, Descartes alleges an interaction of mind and body, an interaction of two distinct substances. This distinction between the two is required by what philosophers have called the Cartesian compromise. One unanswered question left by Descartes is how these distinct substances, the mind and the body, can operate causally in both emotion and perception. Descartes failed to follow his own important rule for suspending judgment when he chose to make the pineal gland the point of interaction: he had no real evidence for making that decision. Further, he failed to see that a problem arises when any organ is made the seat of something, like the soul, that does not have the property of extension. In addition, he overlooks the fact that the soul, by his own admission, is immaterial; and yet he says that the immaterial soul can act, does act, on the human body by contact, even though an immaterial essence cannot make such a contact.

A larger philosophical problem is, of course, overlooked by Descartes, a problem which greatly interferes with the seriousness with which later generations could view his work. Interaction of soul and body, if a fact, seems to bring mind back into the mechanistic world. Descartes was trying throughout his philo-

sophical career to make a place for both religious views and scientific views. He hoped to find a synthesis which would do justice to what he saw as the universal mechanism of the world about mankind and, at the same time, would recognize a place for mankind's sense of human values and freedom. *The Passions of the Soul* fails to allow that synthesis, though Descartes apparently hoped it would not fail: he was willing to allow passion to be entangled in the material universe, but

believed he could exempt will from such an involvement. He admitted that perception involves the material universe, but he wanted to make thought a pure activity of the soul, absolved from interaction with the body or the world about the body. In this book on human emotions, as in his other works, Descartes failed to provide a dualism which could prevent a conflict between the claims of physics on the one hand and theology on the other.

THE PASTON LETTERS

Type of work: Domestic letters, family papers, and legal documents

Authors: Members of the Paston family and their contemporaries, 1422-1509

First published: 1787

Principal personages:

WILLIAM PASTON, a Norfolk lawyer and landowner

AGNES PASTON, his wife

JOHN PASTON, his son, also a lawyer

MARGARET PASTON, his wife

SIR JOHN PASTON, their eldest son

JOHN PASTON III, his younger brother

The turbulent era of the Wars of the Roses forms a background for *The Paston Letters*, a remarkable collection of personal correspondence and legal documents belonging to a wealthy family in Norfolk, England. Three generations of Pastons left records of a century when law and justice were often at the mercy of might, when noblemen took advantage of their sovereign's preoccupation with keeping his throne to besiege prosperous manor houses, and when robbers made the road from Norwich to London a perilous one to travel.

The first of the Pastons to make his mark was William, whose skill as a lawyer and judge in the early years of the fifteenth century enabled him to pass on a substantial estate to his son John, who was also trained in the law. John Paston served as a member of Parliament and, like his father, as a justice of the peace for Norfolk. He added great wealth and greater controversy to his family fortunes when he was named executor and chief heir of a Norfolk nobleman, Sir John

Fastolf; he was accused of forging Fastolf's will, and years after his death his sons were still trying to acquire clear title to Fastolf's home, Caister Castle.

It is due chiefly to the prudence of John Paston that the documents comprising *The Paston Letters* survive. He realized the importance of his own papers and Fastolf's as legal evidence, and he so thoroughly convinced his family of their value that after he died his wife wrote her eldest son: "Your father . . . in his troubled season set more by his writings and evidence than he did by any of his moveable goods. Remember that if they were had from you, you could never get any more such as they be."

The Pastons had a remarkable ability to float with the political tide and to recover from adversity. They were not fiercely partisan in the conflicts between York and Lancaster; it was more important to keep the favor of whoever occupied the throne. The two younger Johns served on both sides. Sir John Paston was at the court of Edward IV in 1461, try-

ing to settle questions about Fastolf's will; in 1468 he and his brother John III attended Princess Margaret, the king's sister, to Bruges for her wedding to the Duke of Burgundy. Three years later both fought for Henry VI, who was temporarily restored to the throne, but they were quickly pardoned for this service when Edward once again gained power.

The personal fortunes of the Paston family were not much more stable than the throne. They were evicted from their home, Gresham Manor, by Lord Molynes in 1448. While John Paston was imprisoned in 1465 for trespassing on the Fastolf property, his home at Hellesdon was completely destroyed by the Duke of Suffolk's men. Just four years later the Duke of Norfolk besieged and took Caister Castle, which changed hands twice more before the Pastons finally secured it permanently.

The papers collected as *The Paston Letters* run to thousands of pages, many of them complicated legal documents. Norman Davis' selection of about one hundred of the most interesting personal letters, printed in the Clarendon Medieval and Tudor series, gives the general reader an excellent picture of the Paston family and the major events in their lives.

Half a dozen personalities dominate the correspondence. Agnes Paston, who added considerable personal wealth to her husband William's estate, was a shrewd business woman and a concerned, though occasionally domineering, mother. Her letters to her son John contain advice, as well as questions, about business matters; she herself took care of many of the problems of overseeing her property. Writing to a younger son, Edmond, a student at Clifford's Inn in London, counseling him to persevere in his legal studies, she quoted his father's opinion that "whosoever should dwell at Paston should have need to conne [know how to] defend himself." On another occasion she commissioned a messenger to see that a third child was making progress in his lessons and that his clothes were in order.

She seems to have taken a philosophical view of life in her later years. She wrote to John: "By my counsel, dispose your self as much as you may to have less to do in the world. Your father said, 'In little business lieth much rest.' This world is but a thoroughfare and full of woe, and when we depart therefrom, right nought bear with us but our good deeds and ill."

John Paston, the head of the family during the years when the surviving papers are most extensive, was a competent business man and a conscientious, if stern, husband and father. He was particularly severe with his oldest son, who appeared to be squandering both time and money, and he refused for several years to receive the young man at home. The overall picture of Paston as an unbending man is somewhat softened by a letter written to his wife after she had visited him in prison. He thanks her for the "great cheer" she made for him, though he complains about the cost of her entertainment, and he concludes his epistle with a rather ponderous poem.

The letters of Margaret Paston and those her husband wrote to her should dispel for once and all the concept of the medieval woman as sheltered and helpless. Margaret was expected to oversee the family property with the help of servants while her husband was in London; most of his letters to her were lists of business matters to attend to. He advised her to keep his notes close at hand, checking off his instructions as they were carried out. It was Margaret, not John, who had to withstand the assaults on Gresham and Hellesdon; one of her sons aided in the defense of Caister Castle, but the primary responsibility seems to have been hers. She performed another valuable service for her husband by reporting on local affairs relating to their interests. Public opinion fluctuated for and against the Pastons, and there were times when John's presence in Norfolk would have put him in grave danger.

Margaret played the traditional mother's

role of mediator between father and son, begging her husband to give Sir John a chance to regain his favor. As she grew older her relations with her children became a little strained. Sir John resented her implications that he was not shouldering his proper responsibility after his father's death, and John III complained in a letter to his brother: "Many quarrels are picked to get my brother E[dmund] and me out of her house. . . . All that we do is ill done, and all that Sir James [Margaret's priest] and Peacock doeth is well done." Margaret was more severe with her daughter Margery, who imprudently fell in love with her family's bailiff, Richard Calle, and insisted upon marrying him.

After the death of John Paston of the plague in 1406, the responsibility for overseeing the family's affairs fell upon Sir John and John III. Sir John appears in his letters as a lover of books and a connoisseur of pretty women. He enjoyed jousting more than attending to family business, and his mother several times chided him for not doing his duty. Some brotherly responsibilities appealed to him, however, and he wrote an attractive letter to John III in 1467, thanking him for his care of Caister Castle and giving him advice on the courting of a prospective bride. While marriage was primarily a business affair, sentiment evidently played some part in the arrangements: "You be personable, and peradventure your being once in the sight of the maid, and a little discovering of your good will to her, bending her to keep it secret, and that you can find in your heart, with some comfort of her, to find the means to bring such a matter about as shall be her pleasure and yours, but that this you cannot do without some comfort of her in no wise—and bear yourself as lowly to the

mother as you like, but to the maid not too lowly, neither that you be too glad to speed [succeed] nor too sorry to fail." All this good advice came from one who was a bachelor at his death in 1479.

Even before Sir John died, John III was carrying much of the burden of running the family estates. It was he who, with his mother, vainly tried to protect Caister Castle against the attacks of the Duke of Norfolk. His correspondence with his wife, Margery Brews, shows him to be an affectionate, open person, blessed in a happy marriage. In spite of his differences with his mother over her reliance on her priest, he was a devoted son. Late in her life Margaret asked her daughter-in-law to intercede with her husband to insure that he would provide for his younger brothers and sisters and for family servants after his mother's death. John III replied in a touching letter that he was grateful for her trust in his wife, but that there was no need for an intermediary between her and him; he was always ready to do what she asked.

Many other individuals make their mark in the reader's mind: poor Thomas Dennis, who asked for Paston's help for his wife while he was imprisoned; Richard Calle, whose persuasive love letter to his future wife suggests why the girl was willing to risk her family's wrath to marry him; Margery Brews, who addressed her letters to her "valentine," John III, before their wedding.

As a literary monument *The Paston Letters* leaves much to be desired. There was no striving for style; the authors either set down exactly what they meant to say or used the technical legal language of the day. Yet few documents in history are more valuable as a source of insights into a century and a way of life.

PASTORS AND MASTERS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892-)

Time: Indefinitely between 1900 and 1914

Locale: An English public school and the home of several masters, with geographical identification purposely vague

First published: 1925

Principal characters:

CHARLES MERRY, a Latin teacher and a co-master without real power
MRS. MERRY, his satellite

NICHOLAS HERRICK, the owner of the school, who avoids school work
EMILY HERRICK, Mr. Herrick's half sister, the clearly seeing eye of the novel

DICKIE BUMPAS, the don who wrote the novel Mr. Herrick believes the dead master, Crabbe, wrote and which Mr. Herrick wishes to claim as his own

Though it was subtitled diffidently "A Study" when it appeared first, *Pastors and Masters*, Ivy Compton-Burnett's first characteristic novel, reveals in small ways the attitudes, preoccupations, and techniques that she has modified and improved in the novels that have followed. It is as different from her first novel, *Dolores*, as night is from day. There is no touch here of the sentimental admiration for self-sacrificing, or doing good, in any conventional sense of these moral words. Miss Compton-Burnett records, largely by means of dialogue, the frequently enlightened, sometimes bumbling, search for self-satisfaction. The "good" are no more rewarded or punished than the "bad" in Miss Compton-Burnett's cool look on life and death. Aesthetic punishment or reward seems to fall here, as elsewhere, on those who would be witty or selfish and bungle it; aesthetic reward comes to those who are intelligent, witty, and able to cope with uprisings and downfalls equally well. No moral judgment is passed; people are like that, Miss Compton-Burnett appears to feel. Who can complain sensibly about the way the universe is constructed?

Typically, *Pastors and Masters* begins with a long speech by Mr. Merry, the master who does the work Mr. Herrick abhors. Mr. Merry chides the students for not poking the fire, for putting too much coal on it, for degrading him, a middle-aged man doing honest work, for not respecting him. He continues with typical unrealism (that later becomes more charming than realism) to talk of how

hard he works to support his family, how surprised he is by their bad human laziness (though of course he is not), by their dressing poorly, being half asleep at seven, being ungentlemanly—as he and all the characters are judged by Cardinal Newman's famous definition of gentlemanliness as empathizing with and being considerate of others.

The speech is followed by a brief description and judgment upon Mr. Merry. He is tall, thin, about fifty, pale; he has screwed-up eyes which he can make kind. The author reveals that he feels affection, disgust, pride, and despair as he surveys the pupils. There are few or no characters in Miss Compton-Burnett's novels who do not feel and show all these attitudes.

If they have not read a good many of the novels that followed, many sophisticated readers would find much to complain of in this beginning. No one would talk like Mr. Merry, really. The expository part about his being middle-aged and supporting a family certainly is not in the modern mode. The expository description of Mr. Merry, the school, the pupils, comes too fast for most aesthetic palates. One can hear, almost, impatient readers weaned on Joyce, Forster, and Virginia Woolf say, "This is like a bad play, with the stage directions following the too long speeches they should precede."

But any reasonably sensitive reader who reads the rest of *Pastors and Masters* would change his mind. Like the rest of her novels, it is more like a play than any contemporary fiction apart from Henry

Green's; but it is like a very good drama. Ivy Compton-Burnett is as exact and economical a writer as one can find in modern times. She expects her readers to be alert, to co-operate intelligently in the making of her book a work of art. He who runs will misread her; he who reads her novels with the attentiveness one more usually gives to poetry will find great pleasure and great enlightenment.

In the beginning passage, for example, he may discover that the school is very casually run, that the boys are not at all well disciplined, that Mr. Merry is not sure of himself, and that this is the reason why he imparts an air of alluring kindness even while he barks more loudly than he will bite. The passage is necessary preparation for the presentation of the atmosphere of the school—watered marmalade, inattentive, not unhappy boys unrigorously schooled—and of the minor characters who are necessary to our understanding of the major ones: Mrs. Merry, mild and grievously faced; Miss Basden, dutiful, respectful, incompetent; Mr. Burgess, who comes late to breakfast and simulates absorbed attention to his "elders and betters." Only one of the major characters, Mr. Herrick, appears in the first chapter and then very briefly. He does the ten-minute scripture reading that constitutes his day's work, but we get no real insight into him.

In the second chapter, the major characters, Herrick and his sister, reveal themselves with engaging abruptness. He remarks sharply that it is good to be back with his half sister; he is caustic about Merry's doing his duty. His sister, franker still, says that the sight of duty makes her shiver and to do it would kill her. Their speeches instantly give a good idea of what to expect from Nicholas and Emily Herrick. The sight of duty makes Nicholas shiver. Emily not only agrees; she unhesitatingly and wittily expresses what a more ordinary person would veil with hypocrisy. This she continues to do throughout *Pastors and Masters*, for she is not only herself but the author's eye.

Her conversation often approximates what one might say under certain circumstances, but more often it is spoken revelation of that which we may think and feel, but hide from the world. The outspoken statement of the usually concealed applies to all of Miss Compton-Burnett's characters; they are wits rather than witwounds. The conversation that carries the plot forward is not, fortunately, at all like what people actually say to one another. It resembles the beautifully unnatural language we find in Restoration comedy and Greek tragedy. Consequently, one must have all his faculties about him while he reads Ivy Compton-Burnett. Either he comprehends or he misses her meanings entirely.

What the reader who comprehends uncovers in *Pastors and Masters* is very worth his while. Nicholas, one discovers, is one of Miss Compton-Burnett's more amiable exploiters. By assembling his group of incompetent and barely competent masters, he is left free to do what he wills. Until the time the novel begins, this has been writing criticism, "unkindness" to the work of others. But, early in the novel, at the deathbed of Crabbe, a ninety-year-old don who has been his friend, he is presumed to have discovered the material for a short novel. This comforts him, for he has the egotism of one who admits God's equal importance reluctantly and has hitherto lived disappointed that he had written only criticism, has not even created a miniature fictional universe. As the reader discovers when he is about to read his novel to a small writers' group, he has stolen the manuscript from the dead Crabbe, who had been given it to read by its actual author. To complicate matters further, the actual author, Bumpus, also intends to read it to the group. What happens at this private reading is good comedy and penetrating criticism of the pretensions of human beings. Nicholas, who does not think one should overlook his selfishness himself or reveal it to others, continues his egocentric course, discovered only by

his sister. She prefers not to tell because she has learned that she prefers his wicked intelligence to the naïveté of those whom Nicholas gulls and exploits. By the end of the novel, all the characters except Emily Herrick, the honest and witty observer, stand implicitly condemned. As one thinks back over the book he gets the uncomfortable feeling that he resembles the other characters more closely than he does Emily.

Perhaps it is because of her disturbing

insights rather than because of her unusual technique that Ivy Compton-Burnett has not become a widely popular novelist. It is a pity that this circumstance prevails, for her novels can bring delight even when they are about the undelightful and the truths she compels us to face about ourselves are as important as they are disconcerting. No contemporary novelist writes better or tells us more penetratingly what we should want to know, but prefer to ignore.

PEDRO PÁRAMO

Type of work: Novel

Author: Juan Rulfo (1918-)

Time: Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Locale: Comala, Jalisco, Mexico

First published: 1955

Principal characters:

PEDRO PÁRAMO, a rural boss and landowner

JUAN PRECIADO, one of his many sons, the main narrator of the story

DOÑA EDUVIGES DYADA, the friend of Juan's dead mother

SUSANA SAN JUAN, Páramo's childhood sweetheart, later his wife

FATHER RENTERÍA, the priest of Comala

ANA, Father Rentería's niece

ABUNDIO MARTÍNEZ, another of Páramo's sons and his killer

MIGUEL PÁRAMO, the son whom Páramo acknowledged

DAMIANA CISNEROS, Páramo's housekeeper

FULGO SEDANO, Páramo's man of business

DOROTEA, an old procuress

DAMASIO (EL TILCUATE), a revolutionist in the hire of Páramo

Few Spanish-American writers have been so limited in production as Juan Rulfo or, at the same time, received higher praise for artistic performance. At present only two books compose his total literary production: *El Llano en Llamas* (*The Valley in Flames*), a collection of short stories, and *Pedro Páramo*, a novel. Since 1955 he has remained silent, maintaining in retirement from the literary scene his reticent, introverted character.

When *Pedro Páramo* was published, it received immediate applause. It is a short, intricate, intense psychological fantasy. In order to understand and appraise this novel the reader must take into ac-

count the background of the history of Mexican fiction.

In Mexico, as in many of the Spanish-American countries, the rural novel is not new. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, novels have appeared portraying the character, environment, and vicissitudes of Mexican peasants, both *mestizos* and Indians. *La Bola*, by Emilio Rabasa; *Los Bandidos de Río Frío* (*The Thieves of Río Frío*), by Manuel Payno, and *La Parcela* (*The Parcel*), by José López Portillo y Rojas, represent the most renowned works of Mexican rural fiction of that period. The subject holds perennial interest from the revolutionary period to the present. Most

of the novels that take the Revolution as their principal theme have rural settings and *peones* as main or secondary characters, or present the situations in which they live and their violent, cruel reactions to a world of despotic oppression. Mariano Azuela, José Rubén Romero, and Gregorio López y Fuentes, to mention a few, emphasize country life and rustic or provincial characters. The last of the above mentioned writers introduced the Indian, through his novel *El Indio*, as an important though frustrated participant in revolutionary deeds. Closer to our time, Augustín Yáñez has dealt also with rural settings and lives in his novels *Al Filo del Agua* (*The Edge of the Storm*), *Las Tierras Pródigas*, and *Las Tierras Flacas*. More recently, anthropology and ethnology have pervaded Mexican fiction. Based on personal experiences most of the time, some writers have told, closer to reality than to fiction, of the Indian world; this is the case in *El Eiosero* (*The God-maker*), by Francisco Rojas González, and *Juan Pérez Jolote*, by Ricardo Pozas. But none of these or other less-known Mexican writers of fiction had previously used vanguardistic formal techniques and developed so intimate an approach to rural Indian life as Juan Rulfo. This is the merit and the place of this novelist on the Mexican literary scene.

Pedro Páramo is written in modes of modern narrative techniques and style: the stream of consciousness and the consequent monologues, the directness and realism of expression, the multiple and intermingled recording of facts, the flashbacks of action. Together with these structural and formal characteristics, Rulfo has the quality of having delved, as no one Mexican writer of fiction had done before, into the complex, atavistic, desolate, fatalistic Indians of Mexico.

Pedro Páramo is a strange novel. Somber in its harsh realism, poetic in its deep feeling of compassion for the anxieties of the human soul, it is a book of voices—voices of people, voices of nature, voices

of circumstance and morality and passion. All of its characters are dead, are only voices, murmurs, who live in a town, Comala, a village of echoes. All of these dead people, souls in pain, are presented as if they were living in another world, in a strange limbo of memory. Everybody in the village remembers his life and those of the others. At the same time, intemporality prevades all the story. As if chronology has tried to stop every action, the characters act as paralytic, stationary beings. The town itself, Comala, where they paradoxically live, although dead, is a place where the only noise is that of the spider and the echoes of silence.

From these figures and his rural setting, Rulfo creates his work. He has declared that the original title for the book was *The Murmurs*, a term that would also describe the novel, but he eventually changed that title for the present one because it seemed to him that Pedro Páramo is in fact the pivot of the story. At the same time, the author has stated that all these dead people were roaming about Comala because the parish priest, also existing in sin, was not able to absolve their sinful souls. With these assumptions, the book can be understood.

The story opens when Juan Preciado, a peasant, Páramo's son, in fulfillment of the last will of his mother, arrives in Comala looking for his father. During his journey, another walker joins him; the traveler turns out to be another of Páramo's son. He tells Juan Preciado that their father was a "kindled rancor" and that by now he is dead. Preciado finds only one other person in Comala, Eduviges Dyada, old friend of his mother, and she gives him shelter. The reader soon begins to realize that this woman is also a dead being, as was the companion of Preciado during his journey.

Suddenly, the action changes. Now Pedro Páramo appears when he was a boy, dreaming of his childhood sweetheart, Susana San Juan, and doing some domestic chores. Susana, who will appear later in the story, is the only true, deep

love of Páramo, in contrast to the many other women whom he seduced or raped.

The action then returns to Eduviges Dyada and Juan Preciado, and from this time on the back-and-forth change of time, situations, and characters constitutes the structure of the novel. The reader must be alert in order to follow the subplots contained in the main general theme. Eduviges tells Preciado that she should have been his mother, for on her nuptial night his true mother, advised by a superstitious soothsayer, asked Eduviges to take her place beside Pedro Páramo. Little by little, the main character's moral profile is drawn by Eduviges, who keeps telling Preciado what kind of man his father was. Through her, we know also of Miguel Páramo—the only son whom Pedro acknowledged—a violent depredator and sexual young man who dies in an accident. Father Rentería, the local priest, now enters the plot. He is perhaps the most tormented of all the characters. His brother has been murdered and his niece raped by Miguel Páramo, but he must celebrate a funeral mass and perform the last Catholic rites for the soul of Miguel. He feels also that he has betrayed his priestly state because he has not presented a firm stand against the abuses committed by wealthy people, chiefly those of Pedro Páramo, and he has not given true hope and consolation to the poor. Once, when he went to confess to the parish priest of Contla, he was reprimanded for this and denied the absolution because he had allowed his parishioners to live lives of superstition and fear.

Later in the story, Pedro Páramo appears again, no more as a child but as an adult. He has grown, as Father Rentería says, as weeds do and has obtained all that he ever wanted—women, children, lands—by such unscrupulous means as unfulfilled promises, money, threats, violence, and death. His only redeeming trait is his love for Susana San Juan, who was previously married to Florencio and who, after becoming a widow, has agreed

to become Páramo's wife. But she goes insane and a change begins to transform Pedro's soul. He now feels old, sad, impotent, and his situation becomes worse after Susana dies in his hacienda, Media Luna. On her deathbed she believes herself to be with her dead husband. Páramo's life begins to disintegrate; he suspects that death will come soon. One morning a son, Abundio Martínez, grief-stricken because of his wife's death, gets drunk and goes to his father to ask money for the burial. Blinded by wine, Abundio stabs his father to death. Páramo falls as if he were a pile of stones.

In spite of being a novel of monotony and evocation, *Pedro Páramo* interests and moves the reader because of its vigor and intensity. Violence, sex, love, fatalism, and solitude combine to give a portrait—or at least a portion of a portrait—of the Indian soul. Rulfo, a native of Jalisco, one of the Mexican States of more clearly defined and strong characteristics, spent part of his youth among peasants and Indians on his father's haciendas and had the occasion of learning at firsthand their true, authentic spirit. It is not a picturesque folkloristic account of Indian life that runs through the pages of his book. Its qualities of insightful realism and introspection had already appeared in his previous work, *El Llano en Llamas*, a book that introduced in Mexican literature a new treatment and style of rural and Indian fictional characters.

This unfolding of the Indian spirit is not merely ethnographic; it is artistic also. The characters possess a double profile: one real, one spectral. Sharing a concrete, physical life and a strange immaterial, dreamlike vitality, they embody and combine both realism and idealism, the two poles of Rulfo's art. The popular expressions of the characters are also elevated to aesthetic rank. Though sometimes Rulfo takes liberties with language in his style, the intentional and affective charge of the words produces an effect of primary and calm beauty.

There are flaws in the novel, such as

its lack of a nucleus and a true unfolding of the plot, its confused intersection of temporal and local planes, and its emphasis on the pejorative aspects of experience; however, Rulfo's work has marked a milestone in Mexican fiction for the

novelty of his treatment and the depth of his appreciation of the Mexican Indian, who after centuries of cultural and political history is still not sufficiently known or understood in his own country.

PERSONAE

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Ezra Pound (1885-)

First published: 1926

From the beginning, Ezra Pound's problem has been to re-create what he found meaningful in the past and yet sound modern. He solved the problem partially in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, completely in *The Cantos*. That he did solve it is attested by the enormous influence of his poetry and criticism on the modern idiom, an influence felt even by those who find it difficult to understand him. But the solution to what was essentially a problem of form meant, inevitably, any number of false starts that the later Pound would seek, quite humanly, to ignore.

Personae, the 1926 collection of Ezra Pound's shorter poems, notes that it contains all of his poems to date except for the unfinished *Cantos*. The statement is misleading. The volume contains a relatively small selection of the very early Pound, the poet who could, without any difficulty, have two of his poems published in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* ("Ballad for Gloom" and "The Portrait," neither reprinted in *Personae*), and the Pound who smacks so clearly of the pre-Raphaelites, of Swinburne, of the poetry of the 1890's, of Yeats, and of Browning. Of the 145 poems printed in Pound's first volumes—*A Lume Spento*, *A Quinzaine for this Yule*, *Personae*, *Exultations*, and *Canzoni*—only forty-two survive in the *Personae* volume of 1926. Basically, this is the Pound concerned with medieval themes, Provençal forms, and, generally, the tradition of the aesthetes.

In both imagery and idea, "Grace Before Song," from *A Lume Spento*, speaks the aesthetic ideal of the Nineties. Concern with fleeting moods, lack of concern with society—these attitudes describe at least one aspect of the decadence. Because the English decadence drew heavily on Swinburne and the pre-Raphaelites, we find Pound following suit. The medieval atmosphere of the pre-Raphaelite ballad is also to be found in Pound's "Ballad Rosalind."

The pre-Raphaelite ideal of feminine beauty is never absent from these early poems; indeed, it never quite seems to have left Pound. As for the impact of Swinburne, it is defined by Pound himself in the reverential "Salve O Pontifex—for Swinburne; an hemi-chaunt." Of the early Yeats, Pound was almost a disciple. One critic has pointed out that "the Tree" is a compendium of Yeatsian influences. Yeats's opening lines from "He Thinks of His Past Greatness When a Part of the Constellations of Heaven," with their references to the hazel tree and grief for all things known, are clearly echoed in Pound's poem.

The central fact of these early volumes is the tremendous variety of influences and modes. Pound is clearly a seeker who is willing to try anything at least once. In these early volumes we also discover Pound's concern with translation as providing both techniques for the developing poet and insight into earlier states of mind. At this point, unfortunately, Pound's translations, mainly from Proven-

cal and early Italian, were colored by pre-Raphaelite diction and turns of phrase. Thus, not only did he fail to "make it new," to quote a favorite phrase of Pound, but the translations are rather obfuscated.

Ripostes, published in 1912, is generally taken to mark a turning point in his poetry, but there is still a good deal of the old preciousness in "A Virginal" and "Silet." The best poems (and some of the worst) are translations and adaptations. As always, Pound is never concerned with literal translation, but with a revival of the spirit of the poet and his time; ultimately, the translation is as much Pound's work as the original poet's. The volume contains Pound's famous version of "The Seafarer," for it was inevitable that Pound should attempt at least one example of Anglo-Saxon form. (He repeated it later in "Canto I.") The volume contains also "The Return," modeled on a poem by Henri de Régnier.

The poem deals with the return of the Greek gods, who, to Pound, represent eternally recurrent states of mind, the states that are defined again and again in *The Cantos*. It stands as a metaphor of Pound's efforts to make what is still alive in the past speak to and help salvage the present, an effort represented in *Ripostes* by "The Seafarer." It also suggests a shift in allegiance away from the poets of the English decadence to the French Symbolists, who helped Pound, as they helped Eliot and others, learn how to be modern.

By the time he published *Ripostes*, Pound had begun to teach others, becoming a propagandist for the Imagist movement with its stress on compactness and concreteness. In 1914 he edited the anthology *Des Imagistes*, and in the following year he published what was essentially a set of variations on the Imagist mode in *Cathay*, a book of translations from the Chinese, based on notes left behind him by the expert on Japanese art, Ernest Fenollosa. Inaccurate as they are, these translations are still considered the

best introduction to Chinese poetry available to most Westerners. Pound knew not a word of Chinese; clearly his ability to work with Fenollosa's notes was the result of a deeply felt affinity with the nature of Chinese poetry, its avoidance of abstract statement, and its reliance on concrete imagery to suggest mood and idea. Thus, in the famous "River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter," the wife's sense of loss and desire for her absent husband are suggested not by direct assertions, but by indirect description.

In 1916, again working from Fenollosa's notes, Pound, who knew no more Japanese than he did Chinese, published *Noh or Accomplishment*. Again inaccurate in many ways, the work made Japanese drama available to the Western mind. In the same year, Pound published *Lustra*, which presented the work of Pound's Imagist period, a Pound free of clutter. Certainly Pound seemed to think so, as one may note in "Salutation the Second."

The sardonic attitude toward his audience is repeated in a number of poems: "Tenzon," "The Condolence," "Salutation," "Causa," "Commission," "Further Instructions," and "Salvationists." It is clear that the satiric muse has taken possession of Pound, and it is employed to pillory many of the states of mind later satirized in *The Cantos* as useless, confused, uncreative. Among these satiric poems are "The Garden," "Les Millwin," "The Bellaires," and "Our Contemporaries." Seeking hardness and directness, Pound had gone to the Latin and Greek epigrammatists, and a number of the poems reflect this study. Though scarcely Imagistic, the epigrams—"The New Cake of Soap," "Epitaph," "Arides," "The Bath Tub," and a number of others—are concentrated and in this way reflect one of the major concerns of the Imagistic movement. The translations, too, have shed their pre-Raphaelite haze, a fact exhibited in translation from the Provençal of Bertrams de Born. Imagistic poems proper, as well as adaptations from

the Chinese, appear, including what has become the archetype of the Imagistic poem, "In a Station of the Metro."

The relatively bald statements of the satires, the sharp pictures of the Imagistic poems, are mingled with poems that show the astonishing qualities of Pound's ear: such lyrics as "The Spring," an adaptation of Ibycus, and "Dance Figure," based, apparently, on the mood of "The Song of Songs."

Lustra gives one the impression of an author testing his technical skills in preparation for a major work. It came in 1920 with "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," which a number of critics consider Pound's "break-through," the poem in which he became, finally, modern. Other long poems of the period are the culminations of earlier developments: translations as a means of re-creating an earlier poetic mood may be seen in "Homage to Sextus Propertius," satire in "Mœurs Contemporaines" and "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour." A sequence rather than a single poem, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is modern in its tight juxtaposition of disparate moods and images, in its containment of a complex of attitudes and experiences, and in its careful, often ironic, control of tone. The poem maintains a duality, a deliberate ambivalence, that can

be confusing. It mocks, bids farewell to, the aesthete in Pound.

But if the aesthete is out of step with his time, the time itself is nothing to be proud of, and several poems deal with its pervasive tawdriness. World War I, the ultimate shock to the aesthete, raises the question of the relevance of art and culture in a period of confusion and change. Neither the pre-Raphaelites nor the aesthetes seem to have very much to say in such a time because they fail to reflect the mood of the decade. Successful writers, like "Mr. Nixon," who probably represents Arnold Bennett, are as tawdry as their age. Thus, in the tenth poem of the sequence we are told that in an age of cheapness and insincerity that is impatient of craftsmanship or indifferent to the heroic example of the artist, the stylist has sought shelter from the world. In the second part of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," the poet drifts toward death, unable to create what "The Age Demanded," and also unable to provide what the age needed, poetry that would relate his private passions to the society around him.

The confrontation of poet and society took place, finally, in *The Cantos*, the long, major poem on which Pound was already at work.

THE PHENOMENON OF MAN

Type of work: Natural history

Author: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)

First published: 1955

When *Le Phénomène Humain* appeared in France in December of 1955, it was hailed as a major publishing event. In translation, in 1959, it appeared to be an event of equal interest and importance among English-speaking readers.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, born in Auvergne, France, in 1881, was an ordained member of the Society of Jesus. Early in his student days at a Jesuit col-

lege, he became interested in geology and mineralogy. There followed for him the study of philosophy, an interval of teaching physics and chemistry, and study again, this time in theology. During his teaching years and theological studies, he acquired a competence in paleontology, and it was as a paleontologist that he was to become best known to the world. Gradually his interests became centered in the

general facts and theories of the evolutionary process and were finally pinpointed on what was to become his life's work: the evolution of man. Professionally he was a geologist and paleontologist; as a thinker he felt impelled to formulate a philosophy of evolution which would take into account human history, human personality, and the future possibilities for man on the earth. It is this formulation of concepts that makes up, indeed is, Père Teilhard's *The Phenomenon of Man*. Sir Julian Huxley, in his illuminating introduction, remarks that Père Teilhard was a visualizer of power who saw the whole sweep of the natural history of the world from the Alpha of the origins of things to the final Omega point of collective reflection and the fulfillment of personality. These matters Père Teilhard saw with the eyes of the poet and mystic but always with an imagination and faith supported by rational inquiry and scientific knowledge. If his thoughts and conclusions are bold and visionary, the vision is always disciplined by the demands of the principles inherent in reality.

The Phenomenon of Man admittedly presents many difficulties for the layman and possibly for the professional, but Père Teilhard tells the story of the evolutionary process in a style at once so finished and so engaging that the reader will find it well worth the trouble of time and concentration it will require. Much of his pleasure he will owe to the excellence of the translation by Bernard Wall, who is quick to say that the writer's style is completely and indisputedly his own.

Père Teilhard's basic hypothesis of the interiority of all created things may be presented in his own interpretation:

In Teilhard's view, things possess both an exterior and an interior aspect coextensively related. We would find that there is an "interior" even in the very depths of us if we were to look closely. Once this fact has been realized, it is enough to make certain, in one manner or another, that the "interior" should intrude itself as being present everywhere

in nature since the beginning of time. When speaking of the "within" of the earth, for example, he means not its depth in matter but the "psychic" part of the stuff of the universe which has been enclosed since the first appearance of earth; in every portion of sidereal matter, throughout the cosmos, the "interior" world lines all points of the exterior one.

From this hypothesis Père Teilhard is seen developing a law of *Complexity and Consciousness* according to which a consciousness becomes more perfected as it forms the interior lining of a more complicated structure, so that the more developed the consciousness, the fuller and more organized the structure. Thus spiritual perfection and material complexity are only dual aspects of the same phenomenon. *The Phenomenon of Man* is the story of the application of this law, which is dealt with on three levels of the evolutionary spiral: Pre-Life, Life, and Thought.

In physical perspective, "life" presupposes and supports the theory of a pre-life. In the beginning, apparently through some fantastic accident, a fragment of particularly stable atoms detached itself from the sun, took its place in the cosmos, folded in on itself and assumed the spherical shape which Père Teilhard regards as of utmost importance in the evolution of matter and the emergence of consciousness. The fundamental composition of this earth seems, by and large, to have established itself from the beginning in a series of complex substances arranged in layers which form what are known as the barysphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and stratosphere, and which demonstrate the powers of synthesis inherent in the universe. On the small, spherical surface of the new planet, the powers of synthesis had ideal conditions under which to operate, and we see, through Père Teilhard's eyes, the process of cosmogenesis in the life-before-life of the early earth—the genesis of ever more elaborate structures and organizations shown in the pas-

sage from subatomic units to atoms, from atoms to inorganic, and later to organic molecules.

Pre-life, dormant because of its diffusion in outer space, had no sooner entered the nascent sphere of the new earth than its activities were awakened and set in motion along with the awakening of the powers of synthesis enclosed in matter. Throughout the millions of years of pre-life, the "complexification" of matter, the energies of synthesis were causing ever greater tensions within the earth. Something tremendous was about to happen: the advent of Life in the world and the formation of another envelope over the planet, the *biosphere*.

Père Teilhard regards the appearance of life on the globe as a point of coming to maturity in the process of terrestrial evolution, a forward step of magnitude, the start of a new order in the evolutionary process. The fact that life had a beginning at one point in the natural history of the earth in no way denies the basic condition of our knowledge that each thing has its roots in the cosmos, but to accept the theory that every being has had a cosmic embryogenesis does not contradict or disprove its beginning at some definite moment in history, a change in aspect or nature. Before the threshold of life was passed, Père Teilhard pictures for us a terrestrial era of mega-molecules out of which there originated the cell, the natural granule of life with its increase in consciousness in accordance with the law of complexification. Life had no sooner started than it swarmed over the face of the earth and as it expanded it ramified. To illustrate this process of expansion and ramification, Père Teilhard uses the picture of the Tree of Life with its roots lost in the unknowable world of primordial matter and its trunk branching out into an unbelievable multitude of types. In the course of the millions of years of its growth the Tree of Life has pushed through the fish, the amphibia, the reptiles, the birds, the mammals, the placentals, and on to the primates. These last

had reached such a degree of complexification—of cephalization and cerebralization—that they became the leading shoot of the tree. Psychic tension was increasing on the earth presaging a new order of things for the world the active lines of descent become warm with consciousness as they achieve their most complex structure. In the mammals, the most highly developed of creatures in structure and consciousness, after millenia of years, the brain began to function and thought was born at some localized point of development.

When man first comes into our view, he is already a crowd spread all over the Old World from the Cape of Good Hope to Peking. His infancy or "hominization" lasted thousands of years. What is the nature of this leap from the primate to man as he is first known to us? For Père Teilhard believes that hominization was more than simply the rise of a new species; it brought a new quality into the world and, indeed, has added a new (and final) envelope to the earth. That which makes man different from all other species and places him at the summit of the evolutionary process is the phenomenon of reflection, the power acquired by consciousness to turn in upon itself, to regard and know itself, to know and to know it knows. Man's power of reflection makes him not only different but quite other. With it he is separated from the rest of creation by an abyss which no other species can cross.

But has evolution stopped after its long process leading to man, who apparently has undergone no significant physical change since his first appearance on the planet? In answer to this question, Père Teilhard launches out on bold speculations that are not easy to follow. Man spread over an earth whose sphericity has caused him to turn in on himself rather than to become diffuse and separated as he would have done on an unlimited surface. Through migration and intermarriage mankind forms an almost solid mass of hominized substance, and the process

is still continuing. Because of recent inventions man is able to find himself over earth and sea, in every part of the world. From the first spark of conscious reflection there came a glow which, in ever widening circles, has covered the earth with a new layer which has spread over and above the biosphere. This is the "thinking" layer which Père Teilhard has called the noosphere.

It would appear, then, that evolution is an ascent to consciousness. Therefore, the further complexification of the noosphere should be expected to culminate in a supreme consciousness which Père Teilhard calls the Omega point where the noosphere will be intensely unified and will have achieved a "hyperpersonal" organization. The Omega point may well be reached outside of time and space, but since, for Père Teilhard, the supreme importance of the human personality is a matter of faith, Omega must be in some way loving and lovable at this very moment. To satisfy the requirements of

man's reflective activity it must be independent of the collapse of the forces with which evolution is interwoven. Its four attributes are autonomy, actuality, irreversibility, and, finally, transcendence. Père Teilhard suggests that it has become man's task to organize this global layer of thought (the noosphere) more adequately so that he might better understand the process of evolution on the earth and direct it more fully toward the fulfillment of human personality.

It is possible that the reader will find it extremely difficult—perhaps impossible—to follow Père Teilhard's theories in their line of development to the point of convergence and realization he visualizes. Let him not be discouraged by this possibility for there will be paths along which he can follow with the immense pleasure and profit attendant on being in the presence of a unique mind and a rare spirit. Père Teilhard has the gifts to bring into full play man's matchless endowment, his power of reflection.

PHILOSOPHER OR DOG?

Type of work: Novel

Author: Joaquim Maria Machado de Assís (1839-1908)

Time: Late nineteenth century

Locale: Rio de Janeiro

First published: 1891

Principal characters:

RUBIÃO, forty-year-old teacher

QUINCAS (JOAQUIM) BORBA, his benefactor

QUINCAS BORBA, the dog so named in order to perpetuate the name

BRAZ CUBAS, Borba's old friend

CARLOS MARIA, an introspective young man

CHRISTIANO PALHA, an opportunist who seeks Rubião as a partner

SOPHIA PALHA, his wife

CAMACHO, a politician

DOÑA TONICA SIQUEIRA, a thirty-nine-year-old spinster

MARIA BENEDICTA, Sophia's cousin

Joaquim Maria Machado de Assís, now considered Brazil's greatest novelist, was the mulatto son of a colored house painter and a Brazilian laundress. Born in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, dark of skin and with a stuttering tongue, he became a writer whose pen made him president

of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and the admired acquaintance of the aristocracy. Any Brazilian family with pretensions to culture took care to have his complete works on its shelves.

Three of his four important novels have appeared in English. *Dom Cas-*

murro is probably the easiest for Americans to comprehend. Then came the work whose original title, the equivalent of *Posthumous Memoirs of Braz Cubas*, appeared in English as *Epitaph of a Small Winner*. Its sequel, *Quincas Borba*, now titled in English *Philosopher or Dog?* requires thoughtful perusal before all its facets can be properly understood.

In his posthumous memoirs, the ghost of Braz Cubas, made wealthy by corn-plasters, decides that his good deeds outweigh his bad. Braz is happy in the fact that, though he had successfully pursued the wife of his best friend, he left no children behind him to inherit the miseries of the world. This book helps interpret its sequel. The heroes of both are naïve and reveal Machado's preoccupation with insanity. Both novels seem to preach that only megalomaniacs are capable of grasping happiness. Both scorn the pattern of life of the novelist's contemporaries. Critics see in their realism and flashes of ironic humor the influence of Voltaire, Montaigne, and especially Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* in matters of technique. In an illuminating preface, the translator of the present volume shows its similarity to Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly*.

Philosopher or Dog? develops by the accumulation of unrelated details in more than two hundred brief chapters. There is one in which the author talks to the readers about Sophia's laughter at sight of a fallen mailman. Again, he makes a digression on why long explanatory chapter titles would be useful. The story is sometimes told from the viewpoint of the dog, or by a woman's conversation with two roses. However, no threads of plot are left dangling at the end.

The novel begins with a flashback of the almost completely happy forty-year-old ex-teacher, Rubião, in his luxurious Rio apartment. The death without heirs of his benefactor Quincas (Joaquim) Borba, while visiting his old friend Braz Cubas, left Borba's money to his nurse and disciple on condition that Rubião care for a

mongrel dog that he had given to Borba. The dog was also named Quincas Borba, in hopes that it would perpetuate the millionaire's name among those who could not understand the book in which he had developed his system of thinking.

Machado presents as a sample of his philosophy the fable of two hungry tribes and a small field of potatoes. If they all try to share, both tribes will perish. For one to survive, it must drive off the other. Thus peace is destructive and war is a preservative. With his slogan to the victor belongs the potatoes, and with a determination to be hard and implacable, Rubião goes off to Rio.

The rest of the novel deals with his life there. Of special interest are the well-phrased thumbnail sketches of the characters; for example, that of young Carlos Maria, who each morning thought over the events of the previous day, to find some word or thing to his credit. His discoveries were like inns where he stopped, a weary traveler, for a drink of cool, refreshing water.

Chief of those who seek to use the millionaire's wealth are Christiano Palha and his wife Sophia, who met him on the train en route to the capital and helped settle him in a luxurious home. Palha wants him as a partner, and the naïve Rubião, infatuated with Sophia, agrees to everything.

Knowing the novelist's own idyllic life with his wife Carolina, one wonders at the many unfaithful and unpleasant wives that stray into his pages. The chapter in which Sophia confesses to her husband that Rubião made love to her in the garden is a cynical, ironic thing. Torn between jealousy and covetousness, Palha finally tells her, he owes her lover a great deal of money.

None of the characters is admirable as a person, unless one can feel admiration for the generous hero, too blind to see the motives of the sycophants who hang around his table and bring him their financial worries. The politician Camacho solicits funds to publish a newspaper

and builds Rubião's hopes of entering politics as a representative of his native Minas and of receiving a title from the emperor.

Some suspense is created by the struggle between Camacho and Palha for control of his wealth and friendship. But other episodes and characters intervene. Doña Tónica, a thirty-nine-year-old spinster, daughter of Major Siqueira who owned one book, sets her cap for the rich man. Sensing his attachment to Sophia, she does everything possible to kill it, but she ends as the fiancée of an undistinguished government employee.

A cycle of misunderstandings and confusion joins Carlos, falsely suspected of being Sophia's lover, and her cousin, Maria Benedicta, who vainly adores the wealthy bachelor because he is the only person kind to the bashful country girl.

The grain of insanity that made Borba think himself St. Augustine shows up in his disciple, to give him the delusion that he is Napoleon III. He buys a statue of Napoleon and sacrifices his beard to resemble the emperor. Unfortunately, by now his acquaintances have separated

him from most of his money, and so Palha disassociates himself from his partner. Sophia, who has been encouraging him, though privately calling him a tiresome man, outgrows him as she has outgrown all her other friends. At last Rubião loses everything: money, friends, and mind. Even the little boy he snatched from under the hoofs of a horse in the early part of the story joins with the rest of the youngsters to scream that he is crazy when he appears.

Returning to his old home, with only the dog to keep him company, the man who thought he was Napoleon dies. The look on his face at the moment of death is serious, like the expression of an emperor abdicating. As for Quincas Borba, he sickened, whimpered, and looked frenziedly for his master. One morning he was found dead in the street. The author says that those who have tears may weep for these two, while those who have only laughter may laugh. The result is the same, for the Southern Cross is too high in the heavens at night to tell the difference between tears and laughter.

PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISES AND MORAL REFLECTIONS OF SENECA

Type of work: Essays, letters, treatises

Author: Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 B.C.-A.D. 65)

First transcribed: *De consolatione ad Marciam*, c. 37-41 (*Consolation to Marcia*); *De ira*, c. 41-44 (*On Anger*); *De consolatione ad Polybium*, c. 41-49 (*Consolation to Polybius*); *De consolatione ad Helviam*, c. 41-49 (*Consolation to Helvia*); *De providentia*, c. 45 (*On Providence*); *De constantia*, c. 49 (*On Constancy*); *De brevitae vitae*, c. 49 (*On the Briefness of Life*); *De tranquillitate animi*, c. 50 (*On Tranquillity of Mind*); *De clementia*, c. 55 (*On Clemency*); *De vita beata*, c. 58 (*On the Happy Life*); *De otio*, c. 59 (*On Leisure*); *De beneficiis*, c. 62-64 (*On Benefits*); *Naturales quaestiones*, c. 62-64 (*Natural Questions*); *Epistulae morales*, c. 63

Lucius Annaeus Seneca achieved distinction in three pursuits. He was a noted man of affairs, the adviser of emperors, and tutor of Nero. Although modeled on Greek prototypes, his ten tragedies and some verse make him an important literary figure. Lastly, he was a prime example of Roman Stoicism, well deserving of a place with Epictetus and Marcus Aure-

lius. Seneca's philosophical writings are of three sorts: (1) twelve long essays such as *De providentia* (*On Providence*), *De ira* (*On Anger*) and *Consolations to Marcia, Polybius and Helvia*; (2) 124 letters on moral topics, addressed to Lucilius; and (3) *Naturales quaestiones* (*Natural Questions*), a treatise on natural phenomena.

The three *Consolations*, regarded by some as a distinct category of Seneca's works, are a definite genre, the first Roman examples being by Cicero. *De consolatione ad Marciam* (*Consolation Addressed to Marcia*) was written between A.D. 37 and 41, while *De consolatione ad Polybium* (*Consolation Addressed to Polybius*) and *De consolatione ad Helviam* (*Consolation Addressed to Helvia*) were written while Seneca was in exile between 41 and 49. Marcia was a Roman lady who grieved greatly for three years over the death of her son. For her Seneca invokes a classic Stoic theme, that the best life is in harmony with nature. It is futile and not nature's way to grieve endlessly, but only in moderation. Seneca gives many examples of famous men and women who lost children and grieved but continued a normal life. Death is portrayed as an end to mortal suffering and as possibly a blessing. One cannot suffer the misfortunes the future may bring if one is dead. Marcia is told that she had her son for a few years and should be thankful. She should not wish for more time, for even the longest life is insignificantly short compared to nature. Lastly, Seneca presents a picture of the blissful existence of the dead. They are with the great men of the past and have all the knowledge they wish. The terrors of Hades are dismissed as poetical fancies.

A brother's death was the occasion of the grief of Polybius, a freedman who had risen to wealth and importance. Seneca says little to Polybius beyond that said to Marcia, with a few exceptions. Polybius is reminded that he is a public figure in whom immoderate grief is unseemly and that he owes his energies to Caesar. Seneca argues that grief on Polybius' own account can quickly become selfish and that grief on his brother's account is futile. It is futile if his brother can now feel nothing and inappropriate if he can, for then he is in a blessed state.

It was the grief of his mother, Helvia, over his own exile in Corsica which prompted Seneca's third *Consolation*. It

thus differs from the other two in not being concerned with death, but is much like them in content. Seneca assures his mother that he is happy and has all a man needs. He emphasizes two Stoic doctrines, harmony with nature and cosmopolitanism. It is natural for men to leave the place of their birth; the man who is at home in the world needs few possessions to be happy and he is equally at home in all places. Seneca closes on another typical theme: to alleviate grief, study philosophy and rejoice in what you have.

Of the remaining nine essays, five deserve particular mention as of philosophic interest. *De providentia* (*On Providence*) deals with one of the major questions of the ages—that of why providence permits misfortune to befall good men. His answer is that adversity is a boon, a chance to test one's virtue. Only the best men are selected for such testing. *De Constantia* (*On Firmness*) continues much the same line in a discussion of the paradox that the wise man can receive neither injury nor insult. Since injury is damaging to its object, no wise man can be injured, for his possessions are inward and cannot be damaged. He also cannot be injured because righteousness is stronger than wickedness and the weaker cannot injure the stronger. Seneca offers several similar arguments. The wise man cannot be insulted because he does not care what fools say.

De vita beata (*On the Happy Life*) is Seneca's defense of his own life, at least in part. The way to be happy is to live according to nature. To do this one studies philosophy. Riches are no impediment to this and having them is better than not. In *De brevitae vitae* (*On the Briefness of Life*) he again insists that true living is the study of philosophy. Thus we have access to the wisdom of all ages and transcend temporal limits. In Chapter 13, Seneca makes it plain that he refers to true philosophy rather than scholarly minutiae at which he scoffs. In *De tranquillitate animi* (*On Tranquillity of Mind*) Seneca gives practical rules for avoiding

restlessness and boredom and for achieving inner peace. He says that we must judge ourselves and our undertakings truly, that we must measure things by their usefulness, etc. For various reasons, *On Anger*, *De clementia* (*On Clemency*), *De otio* (*On Leisure*), and *De beneficiis* (*On Benefits*) are of less interest.

Lucilius was a Roman knight, not by birth but industry, and was procurator in Sicily when Seneca wrote the *Epistulae morales*. Lucilius seems to have been an Epicurean and Seneca makes gentle efforts to win him to Stoicism. Numbering 124, the epistles are not literally letters but more a series of essays than communications between friends. However, Seneca tries to keep up the fiction that they are part of a lengthy correspondence by mentioning answers to them. They cover an enormous range of topics, but they are always directed toward explaining Stoic virtue and advocating its adoption. Letter 75, "On the Diseases of the Soul," is a good example. Here Seneca distinguishes three levels of attainment to virtue: (1) those who are beyond some, but not all, vices and passions; (2) those who still feel objectionable impulses but have no diseases of the soul, i.e., vices; and (3) those who are rid of all passion and vice and have wisdom but are not yet sure of it. This work is surely designed to get people to act virtuously rather than to present an analysis of the nature of virtue.

Others of the letters are filled with advice on how to advance through the three steps. One of the more famous is 88, "On Liberal and Vocational Studies." All studies which lead to money-making are scorned as are those which provide only facts and do not deal with virtue. The man who wishes to be good will not study the liberal arts to be so, but only philosophy. Fifty-seven, "On the Trials of Travel," is an admirable example of both the form and function of the letters. Seneca starts by describing an inconvenience encountered in traveling to Naples

and uses it to point a moral of what is to be feared and why. An event taken as the occasion for practical moral advice is typical of most of the letters. Despite theoretical adherence to Stoic principles, which are deterministic, Seneca insists, in 116, "On Self-Control," and elsewhere, that lack of virtue stems from unwillingness not inability. This makes it possible to act on advice. In 94, "On the Value of Advice," Seneca says it has great value. Men need precepts and a preceptor to help them pursue virtue and to remind them of their duty. Clearly this is his justification for the letters as a body. Throughout the letters there are references to traditional Stoic doctrines, e.g., the equality of all men in 47, 70 and 94, and materialism in 57, 66 and 117.

In letter 79, "On the Rewards of Scientific Discovery," Seneca asks Lucilius to send him the facts about Charybdis. Whether or not he drew upon information thus obtained, *Natural Questions*, written in epistolary form and dedicated to Lucilius, deals with many natural phenomena, primarily those of astronomy and meteorology. It was put in its final form in A.D. 63 or 64 although parts may have been written earlier. Insofar as all knowledge was one in the time of Seneca, this is as much a part of his philosophy as are his other prose works. To the modern reader, this unity is strikingly presented by his using natural phenomena as matter for moral discourse. In Section 32 of Book 6 he uses a description of earthquakes in Campania to lead into a question of why we ought not to fear death or adversity. At one point, Section 59 of Book 2, he specifically states that every study must have a moral attached. Philosophically, Seneca is always a moralist.

Scientifically, *Natural Questions* is descriptive rather than theoretical, although Seneca always asks after the cause of things. It is presented piecemeal and might well not yield a consistent overall system. It combines odd facts—lightning will melt the sword but not the

sheath (Sec. 31, Bk. 2); bizarre theories—thunder is caused by the breaking up of clouds (Sec. 28, Bk. 2), and ancient errors—the world is composed of earth, air, fire and water (Sec. 10, Bk. 3) and the heavens revolve about the earth. A great respect for observation is displayed throughout as is an awareness of how much more future ages will know (Sec. 25, Bk. 7).

Throughout his work Seneca remains a Roman with all the practical consciousness and insight for which Romans were noted. Yet he is a Stoic and the theoretical views of that very sophisticated position constantly elevate his practical concerns while themselves providing material for the rules by which a man should lead his life.

THE PILGRIM HAWK

Type of work: Novel

Author: Glenway Wescott (1901-)

Time: An afternoon in May, 1929

Locale: Chancellet, a town in France

First published: 1940

Principal characters:

ALWYN TOWER, the narrator, a young American novelist

MADELEINE CULLEN, a wealthy, middle-aged, attractive Irishwoman

LARRY CULLEN, her husband, an Irish aristocrat

ALEXANDRA HENRY, Tower's friend, a wealthy young American

RICKETTS, the Cullens' young Cockney chauffeur

The Pilgrim Hawk is a tapestry woven of five layers: the hawk's intrinsic or obvious resemblance to the characters; the extrinsic significance imposed by Alwyn Tower as a young man observing the relationship between the Cullens and the hawk; Tower's interpretations ten years later as the middle-aged narrator; the actual intentions of the author (who is very close to Tower); the reader's own opportunities for seeing symbolic meaning in the hawk. With excellent artistic control, Glenway Wescott conducts the reader in and out of this labyrinth of symbols.

Wescott's strategy is most effective. He draws the reader into Tower's nostalgia for the scene itself by conjuring up the aura of the late 1920's when Americans lived in romantic self-exile in Europe. In Chancellet, Tower's friend, Alexandra Henry, has renovated a stable; the interior is ultramodern, with a gigantic picture window that looks out on a wild English-type garden in the back. Having set the stage for the surprise arrival of Madeleine Cullen and her exotic entourage, Wescott evokes an initial *tableau*

vivant that explains Tower's urge to relive, to witness to the reader, the mystery of that afternoon. En route to Budapest in a sleek, dark Daimler, Madeleine Cullen stops off to see her friend Alexandra. A handsome woman with Irish eyes and a London voice, she emerges in fine French clothes and on spectacularly high heels. On her wrist, which is encased in a blood-stained gauntlet, perches a leashed hawk wearing a plumed Dutch hood. Ricketts, a dapper young Cockney chauffeur, and stout, slightly inebriated Mr. Cullen help her over the cobblestones. It is little wonder that Tower is given, even ten years later, to making symbolic connections; at the center of the poetic image, Lucy, the hawk, is an exemplary bird, a many-feathered symbol of love and lust.

Wescott seats his four main characters around the living room and proceeds to satisfy Tower's, Alexandra's, and the reader's curiosity by making Mr. Cullen talkative about falcons and falconry. Later, the four take a walk in the formal garden of a nearby chateau; the Cullens are diverted by its owner. This tactic

gives Wescott a chance to have Alexandra satisfy Tower's and the reader's curiosity about the Cullens. Having left their two wild boys at Cullen Hall in Ireland, they have traveled constantly; become involved with Irish revolutionaries; gone on pig-sticking hunts in Tangier and lion hunts in the jungle. In these activities, Mrs. Cullen is the aggressive one; Cullen merely follows.

Wescott then prepares for the climax of the afternoon's drama. After the ritual feeding of Lucy in the living room, the bird is placed on a bench in the wild garden, while Mrs. Cullen and Alexandra take a rest before dinner. At the chromium bar on the balcony, the drunken Cullen talks to Tower as he would to a bartender, and we get more direct information about the Cullens. The husband almost killed an Irish poet out of unjustified jealousy (his wife allows him his own infidelities); compared with his superlative wife, he is a bad horseman, marksman, sportsman; he loathes travel; above all he despises Lucy who, constantly perched on Madeleine's wrist, prevents him from getting close to his wife. As Cullen's foolishness unveils itself, Tower's malice (the scorn of a captive hawk by a potential, as it turns out) increases.

Aware of the symbolic and psychological complexity of his raw material, Wescott imposes control by creating a clear structure of events and a careful series of highly expressive images in a vivid, descriptive style. This control is especially strong in the melodramatic denouement, which comes in three parts: drunken Cullen stalks Lucy, removes her hood, and cuts her leash; Mrs. Cullen kicks off her high heels and recaptures the bird; then, just as the Cullens resume their journey and their car heads toward Budapest, Cullen himself tries to achieve liberty by pulling a gun—although it is ambiguous as to whether he intended to shoot the chauffeur (whom he suspects of coveting his wife), Mrs. Cullen, Lucy, or himself. As the bird makes a flapping at-

tempt to hold on, Mrs. Cullen rushes back into the house and out to the garden and throws the revolver into the pond. After the Cullens' final exit, Wescott provides a necessary anticlimax in which Tower, Alexandra, and the reader attempt to see some pattern in the afternoon's events.

Wescott differentiates his characters partly by the degree of awareness with which each plucks the bird of its symbolic resemblances to human nature. Tower and Alexandra (who is normally not curious) are eager to see such correspondences. Sitting erect in a straight kitchen chair, Mrs. Cullen makes swift transitions from hawk to human until she sees that her husband, sunk into a soft easy chair, senses certain comparisons to himself.

Like Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* and Marlow in several Conrad stories, Tower and his ambiguous responses are almost as interesting and crucial to the story as the romantic characters whose behavior he witnesses. One of the experiences Wescott creates is the reader's puzzled effort to sift and separate the narrator's reflections and judgments in 1929 from those he makes in 1940 as he gazes backward. Wescott cunningly keeps Tower's voice out of the dialogue until the end, when he converses with Alexandra; the effect is that we hear his mature voice at some distance, contemplating, musing, shifting back and forth in time and attitude. His tone fluctuates among intense curiosity, intellectual excitement, emotional reserve, repulsion, fascination, sadness, amusement, wit, and irony. The reader may get a little impatient with Tower's constant symbol-mongering, his seizing the least pretext to express insights on love, marriage, drunkenness, the aristocracy, animals as compared with people, sports, and numerous other subjects. But out of all that, his character is distilled.

Tower's interest in the Cullens is an extension of his interest in himself. Outdoors people, they are self-centered,

non-introspective, strenuous, self-indulgent, and emotionally idle. Tower feels a cool affinity first with Mrs. Cullen (who signals her desire for his understanding), because, like an artist, she is in control of an artificial but satisfying situation which at any moment may revert to the chaos of nature. Then, reluctantly, Tower shifts to Cullen, for Tower is also a lover and can empathize with the man's predicament: he is a drunken, weak, vain, jealous, dull, mediocre, irritable, boring, conceited, childish fool in love with his wife—who also declares her love for him.

Tower sees that Mrs. Cullen tries to create situations which will allow her husband's masculinity full rein, while she restrains his wildness at the same time. He is a passionate man with streaks of animal ferocity and a desire for the liberty of the wilderness; like the falconer in Yeats' "The Second Coming," Mrs. Cullen strives to control his gyrings. But she is wild herself. She has always wanted a real haggard (trained falcon) to man and train herself; now she has two. She needs on her pulse an avatar of wildness: controlling the falcon, she controls herself. When she persuades Tower to take Lucy on his wrist, Mrs. Cullen beomes electric with restlessness.

Like most falcons, Lucy often makes hopeless escape attempts. As a species, birds are free; only individuals are captive. But all men are captives; each must attempt to free himself. Exceptional is the bird that loves captivity; exceptional is the man who truly loves freedom. In captivity, both bird and man require a falconer. The human paradox is seen in the Cullens' relationship: he needs freedom, but she needs a captive; at the same time, he fears freedom, and she is loath to be a captor. Thus, Lucy both humiliates and sublimates Cullen: he frees her to be rid of her and to make a symbolic gesture of escape; he attempts his own actual release when he pulls the gun.

We see how expert Mrs. Cullen's falconry is when she recaptures the hawk, then the husband. Drink, food, and phi-

lander are to Cullen what a hood, a pigeon, and Mrs. Cullen's stroking fingers are to Lucy: a tranquillization of the instinct to wildness. Purblind to what she is doing to her husband, Mrs. Cullen, too, is hooded. Both the gun and the hawk are new in the Cullens' life, because in middle age they have exhausted love and are now dependent upon distractions, deceptions, disguises—semblances of love.

Tower tells Alexandra that, given the Cullens as examples, she will never marry. However, she returns to the United States, where she meets and marries Tower's brother; it is Tower who does not marry. But married or not, every man becomes a haggard, spending most of his life on some perch. Having surrendered to domestication, hawks become scornful of each other; they never breed in captivity. Even wild hawks rarely die of disease, but death by starvation is common. Madeleine has seen people in the Dublin insane asylum whose eyes had an expression similar to those of a starving hawk. Like the lover and the artist, once a hawk loses his technique, he enters a hopeless cycle of deterioration. The hawk in the sky looks down on his prey; Tower the writer looks down from his tower on human behavior, as when he devours Cullen's story, with the conscious intention of remembering every word and image of that afternoon. Although he occasionally turns his scrutinizing eye upon himself, Tower employs diversionary tactics to avoid the truth. Told the details of the aging hawk's life, he has an intuition of growing old as an artist and a lover; he was failing in 1929; in 1940, he is bitter, nervous, apathetic, full of false pride, bereft of inspiration, and bored.

The concept of vision is one of Wescott's most effective motifs. He describes the hawk's eyes, their function in the hunt, the purpose of the hood; then in various ways he compares the hawk's eyes with those of the other characters. Tower mentions his long-sightedness, expresses fear of going blind, and his immediate

fear (which he shares with Cullen) that the hawk may attack his eyes. Tower's testimony, with its ambiguous tone and compulsive philosophizing, is a failed artist's and lover's means of trying to see while remaining purblind to the meaning of that bizarre afternoon. But the reader's vision comes into lucid focus. Wescott's use here of the Jamesian point of view is

one of the most successful in American literature.

In this manner of handling the parallel between captive hawk and the various forms of human captivity, Wescott controls the flight pattern of the reader as falcon, thus exhibiting the discipline of the artist as falconer.

PING-PONG

Type of work: Drama

Author: Arthur Adamov (1908-)

Time: The present

Locale: Ostensibly Paris

First presented: 1955

Principal characters:

ARTHUR

VICTOR

MRS. DURANTY

SUTTER

MR. ROGER

ANNETTE

THE OLD MAN

With the exception of the final scene, the action of *Ping-Pong* gravitates around an object which seems to possess quasi-mystical power over the characters: the pinball machine. Utilized by the playwright as his central image, the machine evokes in a diffused fashion the aspirations, obsessions, and activities of contemporary society. The game of pinball is analogous to the juvenile ways in which man distracts himself and to his futile efforts to shape the course of his life. The game is both seductive and infuriating: it seduces because it offers the intriguing uncertainty of a gamble; it infuriates because the odds against the player's winning are overwhelming. Lights flash on, bells ring, and the thought of higher scores and a free game prods the player to pour more and more money into the slot. However, the number of balls in the game is limited and the flippers afford very little control over the direction in which they roll. In short, the machine is an effective symbol to convey the multiple aspects of man's endeavors to find di-

version and fulfillment in a world which foils him as incessantly as does the pinball machine.

The fact that the action of the play apparently takes place in Paris is of slight importance; Adamov's universe is a closed universe in which the irrationality and ludicrousness of man's preoccupation with a capricious mechanism can be placed in sharp focus. Conventional plot and characterization are absent. The characters define themselves, in large measure, through their attitude toward pinball machines. They reveal individual particularities in their reactions but, at the same time, they all share the common fate of being fascinated, enslaved, and invariably vanquished by the mechanized demon. They often discuss with deadly seriousness their obsession with the machine, and it is this disproportionate importance which the game assumes in their lives, along with the apparent universality of the compulsion to succeed, which lend to the play a nightmarish atmosphere.

Possible modification and perfection of the pinball machine appears as a means of success, and it is this dream which motivates Arthur, the principal character of *Ping-Pong*. His role, the most clearly delineated in the drama, provides the most significant expression of Adamov's major themes. The temporal span of the play covers practically the entire lifetime of Arthur and his friend Victor, who are first encountered as university students playing a pinball game in Mrs. Duranty's café, and who are last seen at the age of seventy engaged in their own grotesque version of ping-pong. Victor, less intrigued by the machines than Arthur, is still weak enough to remain under their spell when he eventually finishes his medical studies. He follows with acute curiosity the attempts of Arthur to find a place in the Corporation and even suggests to Annette, a young friend of Mrs. Duranty, that she solicit patients for his medical practice in pinball arcades. Thus, even the domain of medicine becomes closely associated with the world of pinball machines.

Arthur is violently bent upon succeeding as an inventor of gadgets to embellish the pinball game. At the outset he is exasperated by the frequent breakdown of the machine when it is shaken. Prompted by the remarks of Sutter, who describes himself as a sampler of public opinion for the Corporation and a childhood friend of "the Old Man" who heads the organization, Arthur decides to present his idea for improvement of the game directly to the president. According to Sutter, any player can contribute to the perfection of the machine and become rich. Despite the fact that "the Big Boss," a greedy hypocrite who professes concern for the players and distributors of his machine, tells Arthur that his idea to add a "Tilt" mechanism to the game has already been adopted, Arthur becomes more determined than ever to find the innovation which will bring him wealth and prestige.

It is significant that the word "Tilt" is

in English (the play was written in French). English is mentioned sarcastically as the language of the pinball machine and America is presented as the epitome of a society dazzled by mechanized novelties and driven by the thirst for material gain. In this more limited and concrete sense, the image of the machine reflects the domination of contemporary society by predatory business enterprises. In addition, English as a foreign tongue has the capacity to mystify the players, and, much like the obscure rituals of a religion which the devout worship blindly, the language of the machine plays a part in captivating the public. Mr. Roger, the obsequious private secretary of "the Old Man," knows nothing about the operation of the business but is considered an asset to the Corporation because he speaks English; he has compromised all his ideals in order to stay in the service of the high priest of the pinball machines. The theme of religious mystification is amplified by "the Old Man" when he jokes about the "Tilt" mechanism as offering death and resurrection for only ten francs.

After Arthur's initial rejection, he is encouraged by Annette, who has become equally anxious to break into the organization, to submit another invention to the president: the visual motif of a rocket heading toward a moon would enable the player to follow the progress of the game much better than the sight of numbers lighting up. This invention reveals a frame of mind which Sutter recognizes as dangerous: men tend to waste their time aspiring to grandiose and vague goals rather than living and acting in face of the realities of the present.

However, Sutter himself does not adhere to this moral precept. He tries to escape the grip of the organization by accepting a position as head of an orphan home far from the frenzied life of the city. This dream to live surrounded by the innocence of children and the calm of nature does not materialize and Sutter eventually finds himself poverty-stricken

and obliged to write tracts against the Corporation in order to survive. He is a solitary being whose son was drowned at the age of fourteen and who strives futilely to find again the mutual affection and understanding which he experienced with his son. As an embodiment of the theme of human solitude Sutter is not at all convincing; he is not enough of a stereotype to become comical, and his sorrow is too gratuitous to be tragic. By the same token, Mr. Roger is clumsily and incoherently sketched as the Intellectual who is guilty of prostitution of values.

"The Old Man" turns down the idea proposed by Annette and Arthur on the grounds that the players will not accept anything as simple as one visual motif; they want dozens of complex gadgets to distract and disconcert them. Arthur grows more and more irrational in his behavior, while, at the same time, his reasoning becomes more closely attuned to the insane world of the machine. He finally joins the Corporation and suggests the elimination of one set of flippers from the game. As in the game of life, Adamov seems to be implying, the players not

only desire to be bewildered but also to feel a perverse joy in finding themselves powerless to direct the course of the ball.

The world of the pinball machine begins to collapse around Arthur as the play nears its end. Annette has become the manicurist of "the Old Man" and evolved into a callous and hysterical opportunist. She dies the victim of an accident which symbolically occurs in front of a pinball arcade. The Corporation is threatened by nationalization, is plagued by mechanical failures in the machines, and its president dies raving madly about the need for production of myriad models of the game without regard for quality.

The last scene of the play presents a final vivid image portraying the absurdity of men's endeavors on earth. Arthur and Victor, now old men, are playing ping-pong. They fight over the rules—an echo of their quarrels concerning the validity of Arthur's inventions—and they ultimately discard both net and paddles. The volleys become wilder and wilder until Victor leaps for one of Arthur's throws and falls dead. Arthur is left alone and panic-stricken on stage.

PLANTATION BOY

Type of work: Novel

Author: José Lins do Rêgo (1901-1957)

Time: Early twentieth century

Locale: Northeastern Coast of Brazil

First published: *Menino de engenho*, 1932; *Doidinho*, 1933; *Banguê*, 1934; *Plantation Boy*, 1966

Principal characters:

CARLOS DE MELO, the narrator

COLONEL JOSÉ PAULINHO, the grandfather of Carlos and owner of Santa Rosa Plantation

UNCLE JUCA, the son of Colonel José Paulinho

AUNT MARIA, the daughter of Colonel José Paulinho

MR. MACIEL, a schoolmaster

COELHO, a school mate of Carlos

MARIA ALICE, a married cousin of Carlos

COUSIN JORGE, the owner of the Gameleira Plantation

MARREIRA, a tenant farmer on the Santa Rosa Plantation

Plantation Boy is the title given in English translation to three of five novels known in Brazilian literature as The

Sugar Cane Cycle. In this semi-autobiographical work, Lins do Rêgo draws from his own experience in the Northeastern

region of Brazil where he was born and reared.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Portuguese settlers of Northeastern Brazil had created a prosperous sugar industry. After the mid-seventeenth century, Brazil's sugar economy declined because of increasing competition from the West Indies. The industry changed in form very slowly through four centuries. At first the *bangüês* and *engenhos*, family-owned plantations, were the economic units of the Northeast, each a world in itself with a Big House, a chapel, a school, artisan shops, gardens, fields and pastures, and until the abolition of slavery in 1888, rows of slave houses called *senzalas*. This quasi-feudal system gave rise to an agrarian nobility, a paternalistic, patriarchal society in which the lower class depended upon and was protected by the ruling upper class. Brazil's sugar coast has been called the Virginia of Brazil, since tradition and aristocracy have had the greatest importance there.

It was in this environment that Lins do Rêgo grew up in the care of his maternal grandfather, who owned nine large plantations when Rêgo was born in 1901. The years that followed brought increasing difficulties for the plantation-owning aristocracy. Corporate, steam-run factories began to spring up under impersonal management, using paid laborers instead of freed slaves and sharecroppers. Rêgo witnessed the gradual but complete collapse of his grandfather's orderly society and registered his complaint against the upheaval and unrest of this moment in history by recording in his works the ruin of the old plantation world which he could not prevent. In this sense, *Plantation Boy* is a regional novel. Rêgo uses Negro folklore, stories, songs, and superstitions for local color; however, excepting the Brazilian words and names, the picture of life presented could be that of the Southern United States in transition. The effect of change in the lives of individuals is the universal theme which emerges above Rêgo's regionalism.

Carlos de Melo, representing the author, narrates the story of his life in a series of recollections. Book One begins with the dramatic death of his beautiful mother, murdered by his father. Senhor Melo is described as Carlos remembers him: his affectionate indulgence which could suddenly turn to violent rage, his eyes often red from crying, his passionate temperament, and the bitterness with which he suffered from real or imagined hurts. Carlos deals with his father in a few short paragraphs, but the image is of such great significance that it fairly permeates the entire work. Throughout his life Carlos is haunted and alternately humiliated and terrified by the memory of his father's insanity, as the boy grows to resemble more and more the neurotic picture he has painted of him. The psychological probings into the author-narrator's mental state in relation to his family and his society are among the most interesting and valid elements in the work.

At age four Carlos is taken to live on the Santa Rosa Plantation under the care of his mother's family. Life on the plantation is a child's paradise, filled with idle days passed in swimming with the *moleque* sons of slaves, learning to ride horseback, becoming acquainted with aristocratic relatives, and educated in the ways of a plantation lord with mulatto servant women. With the enthusiastic support of the *moleque* boys, Carlos follows the example of masculine prowess set by his uncles and grandfather, experimenting first with farm animals but soon gaining a reputation as an adolescent philanderer. At the age twelve he proudly boasts of his first case of venereal disease.

Carlos suffers a second great tragedy when his Aunt Maria, whose warm embraces had taken the place of a mother's affection, marries, moves from the plantation, and leaves him alone with his childhood fears. His mother's horrible fate and the loss of his aunt permanently scar him. He feels a deep fear of death and of being alone, which is reinforced by his witnessing the deaths of his cousin, Lily,

and a fieldhand on the plantation. Insecure and disillusioned. Carlos prepares to leave his grandfather's comfortable home for a boarding school in Recife. The first book ends with the negative observation that the young country boy is lost before his education begins.

The work, subtitled "A Boy's Growth to Manhood," might better be called "A Boy's Failure to Grow." In the first chapter of his life in his reactions to his mother's murder, Carlos displays most of the characteristics which grow within him and dominate his life. He is prevented from running to his mother either to prevent her death or to find affection and comfort in his confusion. This frustration is mirrored later in his inability to act or to establish deep and lasting affections throughout his life. The fear of strangers he feels at the age of four, when his home fills with mourners, follows him on the plantation and in school. His avoidance of reality is evident as he busies himself with other children in order not to notice the loss of his mother. As will always be true in his life, this effort at self-delusion is not satisfactory and leads to an obsessive fear of loneliness and death.

The opening pages of Book Two find an anxious Carlos with his Uncle Juca, in the reception room of the Institute of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a boy's school dominated by a rigid Jewish master, Mr. Maciel. One of the author's best-drawn characters, Maciel is long on discipline and completely lacking in knowledge of child psychology. Although Carlos makes painful academic progress, his social adjustment is impossible from the onset. His extreme sensitivity sets him apart from his peers and leads him into flights of imagination which manifest themselves in exaggerated stories, told to his schoolmates. Withdrawn, restless, and unable to endure his failure in military exercises, he runs away from school. The second book ends as he approaches the plantation, as alone and frightened as he had been upon leaving it.

Book Three takes up the account nine years after Carlos' flight from the institute. Twenty-four and recently graduated from law school, he returns to Santa Rosa. He describes himself as a neurotic young man, unsure of his place and purpose in life. He has become an ambivalent daydreamer, one moment on top of the world with imagined plans for Santa Rosa and for himself as her powerful lord, the next moment in the depths of disillusionment and despair. For one whole year young Dr. Carlos does nothing but lie in his room reading newspapers and swatting flies.

A beautiful married cousin, Maria Alice, provides the one warm love affair in Carlos' life. He is aroused from his indolence at last when she arrives at Santa Rosa and for a time he seems to live through her, believing that she will help him to be the great lord of his dreams. During their affair he becomes a new person, riding over the plantation, shouting orders, settling quarrels, and taking an interest in the work of the plantation for the first time since childhood. But eventually Maria Alice returns to her husband. For the third time Carlos loses a woman he has idolized and his despair is greater than ever. He returns to his room, his newspaper, and his flies. Alternately filled with hate and desolate self-pity, he wishes Maria dead one day and dreams of marrying her the next.

It is difficult for the reader to determine what is actually true about any character or situation in the novel because one is always aware that the view of life being reported is perceived by an unbalanced mind. In the case of Maria Alice, her appearance and character seem to change with the narrator's erratic moods. She is a gentle, loving girl preparing mustard plasters for old José Paulinho, or an evil temptress; she is innocence and beauty, or cunning and sensuality. In long aimless walks Carlos endeavors to escape the reality of having lost Maria Alice. His fears of insanity mounting, he begins to suffer delusions of

persecution and believes his family wants to kill him.

When old José Paulinho dies it is found that Carlos has inherited the Santa Rosa Plantation. Once again he is full of illusions, plans, and dreams of restoring the estate to its former glory. In reality the situation at Santa Rosa becomes increasingly hopeless. Crops fail; workers desert looking for higher wages, and worst of all, Carlos' mind is taken over by the fear that Uncle Juca, bitter at not having inherited the plantation, has joined forces with a Negro tenant in a plot to kill him and take over the plantation. Instead of caring for his own declining land Carlos fearfully watches the progress of his tenant, Marreira, who represents the rise of the working class in Brazil. Carlos finally gathers enough courage to ask Marreira to leave, but when he turns from his imagined enemy, his real enemy has defeated him. The factory which grinds his cane and refines his sugar has extended credit as long as possible, and Carlos cannot pay his debts. Faced with the prospect of disposing of the Santa Rosa at public auction, he sells it to Uncle Juca and leaves the plantation without having learned anything of value from his experience. As the train speeds

him away, Carlos glimpses the prosperous Big House of Marreira, symbol of the new social environment in which he could not compete.

Carlos' fight to keep the Santa Rosa may represent the struggle between the traditional, family-owned plantation and the progressive sugar factories of his native Northeast, but Carlos is more than merely representative of a social class. He is very much an individual, with specific problems and concerns. The realistic characterization of Carlos gives the book breadth. His conflict between illusion and reality, his shame at his failure at school and on the plantation, and his disillusionment in personal relationships make him a tragic figure. The reader understands Carlos' adult problems because they come about gradually as a result of incidents in his childhood.

Plantation Boy is marred to some extent by excessive sentimentality and by indulgence in sexual details. However, in most cases it can be argued that these extravagances are necessary to characterization and therefore contribute to the artistic unity of the novel. Regarded by many Brazilian critics as a national classic, Lins do Rêgo's trilogy is a distinguished addition to Hispano-American letters.

THE PLAYS OF COCTEAU

Author: Jean Cocteau (1891-1963)

First presented: *Parade*, 1917; *Le Bœuf sur le Toit*, 1920; *Les Maries de la Tour Eiffel*, 1924 (*The Eiffel Tower Wedding Party*); *Roméo et Juliette*, 1926; *Orphée*, 1927 (*Orpheus*); *Oedipe-Roi*, 1928; *Antigone*, 1928; *La Voix Humaine*, 1930 (*The Human Voice*); *La Machine Infernale*, 1935; (*The Infernal Machine*); *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, 1937 (*The Knights of the Round Table*); *Les Parents Terribles*, 1938 (*Intimate Relations*); *Les Monstres Sacrés*, 1940 (*The Holy Terrors*); *L'Aigle à Deux Têtes*, 1946 (*The Eagle Has Two Heads*); *Bacchus*, 1951

Cocteau, as poet, dramatist, essayist, and novelist, was a controversial figure in the *avante-garde* activities of French art; he also produced ballets, motion pictures, and drawings. Another facet of his multiple personality was the lengthy discussion, after his return to Catholicism, with Jacques Maritain, the great Thomist phi-

losopher. Thus, there was no aspect of the modern intellectual world that he did not touch.

Beginning his career as a dramatist with the Surrealist movement of the 1920's, Cocteau always practiced what has been called "the esthetics of astonishment"; that is to say, the purpose of each

play was essentially not dramatic, as that word is generally understood. Its purpose was rather to surprise, to astonish the audience into seeing familiar situations in a new light or from an unexpected angle. In spite of what may at first appear to be merely a bag of clever tricks, Cocteau did have a real theory of the function of poetry. It was his purpose to show his readers things that they see every day, but to present them from an angle and at a speed giving the impression that they are viewing the familiar for the first time. Such a theory has both its good and its bad side: it can lead, as it often does, to a genuinely fresh kind of writing; but it can also be merely an excuse for a type of work that is only perversely eccentric. *The Eiffel Tower Wedding Party*, for example, seems to fall into this second category. The drama, if it can be called such, really accomplishes nothing; it is essentially a piece of clever foolishness, another round in the seemingly endless French game of shocking the bourgeoisie. Such a game doubtless gives satisfaction to the players, but it is hardly likely to produce great art.

This same kind of perverse humor flits through even those plays which may be regarded as more serious. Cocteau was preoccupied, as many modern dramatists have been, with the great stories from Greek mythology. Just as Eliot, in *The Family Reunion*, used the *Oresteia* in a modern setting, so Cocteau seemed haunted by the story of Oedipus and in *The Infernal Machine* retold that legend in contemporary terms. The story, as Cocteau interpreted it, is a tightly wound machine, created by the gods for the destruction of a mortal. As the machine slowly unwinds, Oedipus is destroyed as surely as in the tragedy of Sophocles. Yet he is a very different Oedipus. Though his tragic end is physically the same as that of the Greek hero, he is not a great figure who "read the riddle-word of Death, and mightiest stood of mortal men." He is, instead, only a brash youth, conceited rather than proud, who candidly tells Tiresias that he has been seek-

ing a love that is close to the maternal. At the end of the play, when he has blinded himself, the seer says of him that he has not lost his pride: once he wanted to be the happiest of men; now he wishes to be the unhappiest. Thus a neat twist is given to the story; yet for all that, Cocteau's king remains merely a conceited adolescent. And the dramatist has another trick up his sleeve: the ghost of Jocasta appears, visible only to the blinded Oedipus, to tell him that his wife is dead and that only his mother survives and has come to help him. The problem of the wife-mother relationship has been resolved, and Oedipus has, we might say, returned to the womb.

The Knights of the Round Table is another example of this clever manipulation of traditional material. Here we have an elaborate mixture of all the elements dealt with by Jessie Weston in *From Ritual to Romance*. Again we have the impression of a conjurer taking rabbits out of a hat. Cocteau presents Merlin to us as a baneful magician who has cast a blight over Arthur's kingdom so that no flowers bloom and no birds sing. He is accompanied by a minor demon named Ginifer, a kind of Proteus who assumes the shapes of Gawain, Guinevere, and Galahad. The powers of evil are defeated by those of good, represented by the Galahad-Parsifal figure; the sun shines again, and the birds resume their song. But the members of King Arthur's household have lived so long in the shadow and the silence of Merlin's evil that they cannot endure the sunlight and the songs of the birds. Galahad, the poet who cannot see the Grail himself but can only make it visible to others, rides away to fight Merlin again in some other kingdom. Thus the war between Good and Evil is endlessly waged. Here the figure of Galahad is crucial: it is the poet who breaks the spell and frees mankind from the power of evil, just as in *The Infernal Machine* we are told that Antigone, leading her blinded father from the palace, is no longer under the power of Creon but belongs to mankind,

to poetry, to all who are pure in heart. The poet is, therefore, both the white magician combating the forces of darkness and the ultimate possessor of all myths.

It is here necessary to make a very obvious point, that this use of ancient mythology by contemporary dramatists has one very bad feature. In a very real sense, the writer is evading a part of his responsibility as a dramatist, for a large part of his work has already been done for him when he brings Gawain or Oedipus onto the stage. These people are such a part of our literary heritage that our reaction to them is instinctive. And since the playwright can never hope to surpass or even to equal these towering mythological figures, there is an irresistible and often fatal impulse to be merely clever, to distort the characters, or to cover them with a slick and superficial veneer of modernism. The audience gets a certain surprise from this adroit manipulation, especially when, as was Cocteau's practice, it is accompanied by clever stage devices; but in the process the characters lose their ancient grandeur and become rather petty contemporaries.

Of Cocteau's plays over three decades, *Bacchus* is possibly the most conventional. It was written after the letters on the subject of Catholicism had been exchanged between Cocteau and Maritain, and, according to the author, it deals with the same theme as did the letters, the conflict between kindness that is hard and that which is soft and yielding. The scene is Germany in the early days of the Reformation, and the main character, a peasant named Hans, is a young heretic. In the figure of Hans we are compelled to admit that Cocteau falls victim to a literary cliché: that of the naïve child of nature who attempts to return to a primitive Christianity free from the institution of the Church. The arguments presented by Hans are more than a little confused, but Cocteau, as always, finds a way out, by asserting that the sixteenth century showed such confusion of mind that it allowed no really clear or convinc-

ing arguments. Yet the play does have a denouement, in which the Cardinal saves the heretic from being burned at the stake and by a pious lie permits him to be buried in consecrated ground.

In reading of Cocteau's plays, it is difficult if not impossible to find any thread running through them all to which we can catch hold. Each seems an experiment, unrelated to the others. But then Cocteau was a sleight-of-hand artist, a juggler who kept a dozen glittering balls whirling through the air so that the bewildered audience could never be quite certain of what was going on. Just as in *Bacchus* he could evade the question of what the characters really had in their minds, he was always ready with a neat reply to any protest against his work, such as his statement that if a work of art appeared to be ahead of its time, the true reason was that the time was behind the work of art, a reply which, while leaving the critic baffled, was simply no answer at all.

That there was in Cocteau a goodly admixture of the professional "enfant terrible" cannot be denied. Also, there was a strong dash of intellectual snobbery, which took the form of a lofty disdain of his audience. The audience is not there simply to enjoy the play. It must be lectured; it must be informed in no uncertain terms that it is not very intelligent and must be told what to think. He speaks with some pride of the public which has been so thoroughly trained that it can no longer be surprised into anger by anything. Therefore, the only possibility left for Cocteau was the "Call to Order" in the form of a relatively conventional play such as *Bacchus*, for this was the only surprise left, the only rabbit the magician still had to pull from the hat.

After his return to Catholicism, Cocteau said, in writing to Maritain, that he had never created scandal except with the deliberate intention of arousing the sleepy or the complacent. Perhaps this statement sums up his life as an artist, and

perhaps he performed a useful function. Perhaps, too, when all of his childishness

has been swept away, a solid body of work may remain.

POEMS

Type of work: Dramatic idyls

Author: Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

First published: 1842

This volume of Tennyson's poetry contains, with the exception of the songs of *The Princess* and certain lyrics of *In Memoriam*, some of the best poetry he ever wrote. In this 1842 volume is reprinted, often with considerable revision, the earlier poetry of 1830 and 1832 publications which critics had treated, with some justice, harshly. These revisions may be studied with some profit, for they illustrate how Tennyson was developing artistic consciousness during the famous "ten years silence" which followed the death of his best friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, in 1833. In this period Tennyson published few poems but worked steadily revising his early poems and wrote much of *In Memoriam* as well as the new poems, first published in 1842. Since these new poems were composed after Hallam's death, many reflect the various moods the poet experienced as a result of his loss.

Of the poems revised and republished, perhaps of all of Tennyson's poems, "The Lady of Shalott" is best known. In this poem we see the characteristic Tennysonian landscape and the portrait of the isolated lady, as well as the handling of meter and special attention to the sounds of words for which the poet is known. Although landscapes may vary with the mood the poems portray in other Tennyson poems, nature usually harmonizes with and conveys the subject's psychological state, as in *In Memoriam*. Here, however, nature and human activity in the real world from which the lady is withdrawn contrast with the isolation; the lady of the poem finds herself drawn out of her contemplative life into the real world. Ordinarily in a Tennyson poem

the landscape echoes the melancholy isolation and spiritual vacuum of the person, but in "The Lady of Shalott" the Keatsian richness of the sensuous detail emphasizes the variety and motion of the world outside the tower where the lady weaves secondhand images of that reality in her "magic web."

It is the movement, the progress of daily life, of barges passing by on the river and people traveling to Camelot, that the lady perceives as a "shadow," a reflection of life in her magic mirror. Knowing she cannot look upon real life because she suffers under a mysterious curse, she abandons herself to isolation until she grows tired of mere "shadow" and looks out upon "bold Sir Lancelot." Dying, she floats down the river to Camelot, where her arrival mystifies the citizens.

Another characteristic poem is "Mariana in the South." As in "The Lady of Shalott," a natural landscape serves as background for a dramatically conceived feminine portrait, but in "Mariana in the South" nature corresponds to the person's mood; we understand Mariana's psychological state through her responses to nature. Her spiritual condition seems to reflect the barren dryness of the "empty-river bed" and of "shallows on a distant shore" and in the blinding light and oppressive heat of the southern landscape. Alone she worships her beauty at her "secret shrine," the mirror; deserted by her lover she lives "forgotten, and love forlorn." She finds promise of relief only in the "black shadow" of death which hovers over her house.

In "Enone," Tennyson retells the classical legend of Paris and the golden

apple, but the poet approaches it from the point of view of CEnone, the mountain nymph deserted by Paris for Helen. Weary with life, CEnone now sings alone on the mountain in Ida. She tells of the contest in which Paris spurns power, "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" and accepts "the fairest and most loving wife in Greece" in return for awarding the prize to "Idalian Aphrodite." The poem ends with CEnone's dim foresight of the Trojan War and the destruction of a civilization which will accompany her own death.

One of Tennyson's most famous poems, "The Palace of Art," is according to the poet's statement in a "sort of allegory. . . of a soul." This soul "did love beauty only" in all its forms, "knowledge" for its "beauty" alone, and failed to recognize "That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters." The narrator constructs for his soul "a lordly pleasure-house" where it can live apart from the world of men. The soul lives grandly in its magnificent structure, full of sights and sounds of nature, beautiful paintings, a complete paradise for the aesthetic soul. But after three years of intense pleasure, self-absorption, and gratification, the soul discovers despair, confusion, self-scorn, and doubts wrought by alienation and pride. For a year the soul dwells in this state until, throwing off its "royal robes," it retreats to a "cottage in the vale," where it can "mourn and pray." The soul requests that the palace not be destroyed so that it may return, purged of guilt, ready to admit Love.

Tennyson evidently felt this conflict of life and art very strongly, and one wonders if in "The Palace" he actually resolved the conflict since the palace remains standing and the soul wishes to return. When Tennyson abandons himself to the claims of art, as he does in "the Lotos-Eaters," his poetry achieves a quality many readers prefer. "The Lotos-Eaters" describes the emotional disengagement from life, from toil and strain, from fatherland and family, of Ulysses

and his men in the land of lotus eaters. The men tire of their struggle and "swear an oath" to remain in that pleasant environment rather than renew their voyage homeward.

If "The Lotos-Eaters" shows Tennyson at his best in one area, "Ulysses" represents as well as any other poem in the collection his conviction that man's life must be dedicated to action and involvement. This stately blank verse monologue dramatizes Ulysses as an old man dissatisfied with idleness and yearning to "drink/Life to the lees." Not content to rest with memories of his glorious past, Ulysses leaves his kingdom to his son Telemachus and sails out to a newer world with his old comrades. Some greater task, "Some work of noble note, may yet be done."

"The Two Voices," a dialogue between "a still small voice" and the narrator of the poem, represents a dilemma the speaker feels about suicide. The "voice" offers a dozen or more reasons why death is preferable to life, but the narrator counters each argument. Finally a second voice whispers, "Be of better cheer" and promises a "hidden hope." The speaker suddenly perceives the abiding presence of "love," the ultimate design and end of creation manifest in "Nature's living motion."

"Locksley Hall" presents a narrator returned to the scene of his youthful experiences with his "cousin Amy" whom he had loved and lost to another. He reminisces how in his youth he had optimistically felt at one with his age and envisioned a glorious future for the world. Amy and he loved each other until Amy, "servile" and a "puppet to a father's threat" married another man. The speaker sees Amy's fine nature coarsened by contact with her husband; he reflects bitterly on her unfaithfulness. He realizes that he "must mix with action" to prevent his withering in despair, and he wishes to immerse himself in the progress of his "wondrous Mother-Age." Yet the disillusionment he had suffered left him with a

jaundiced eye and he contemplates an escape to "Summer isles of Eden" where there will be "enjoyment more than in this march of mind." Throwing off this romantic dream, however, the speaker resolves to take inspiration from the spirit of his age.

Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down
the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we
sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a
cycle of Cathay.

POEMS AND BALLADS

Author: Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

First published: First Series 1866; Second Series, 1878; Third Series, 1889

Poems and Ballads, published in three series, contains the major part of Swinburne's great lyric poetry. Whether the First Series of these remarkable poems brought him fame or notoriety is a debatable question. One critic has called him the most immoral of all English poets and has pointed to *Poems and Ballads: First Series* as the most obscene book of poetry in the English language. Other critics, like George Meredith and John Ruskin, were fascinated by Swinburne's rich melodies and technical virtuosity. These two opinions of Swinburne reflect the most striking qualities of *Poems and Ballads*: the poems are an open revolt against Victorian prudery, and they are among the most technically perfected poems in English. To the reader of 1866, they were unlike anything hitherto published in England; thus while the critics loudly and indignantly denounced the volume, the public avidly bought it.

Swinburne's major themes in the 1866 volume are sex, freedom, sadism, masochism, and the beauty of evil and of things corrupt or decaying. Influenced by the growing interest in the Marquis de Sade and Charles Baudelaire, Swinburne presents his themes without equivocation. Few poems before 1866 celebrated the pleasures of physical love with the straightforwardness of "Les Noyades," in which the sexual act is public and intensified by impending death, or "Fragoletta," in which the act is given overtones of psychological maladjustment. Such sexual deviations are used by Swinburne

for their ability to shock the prudish reader. In the 1866 volume, for example, sexual maladjustments run all the way from homosexuality in the group of poems called "Hermaphroditus" and in "Sappho," to incest in "Phædra," and finally to sexual flagellation in such poems as "A Match." The reasons for such a concern, however, may be far greater than merely the desire to shock. Swinburne was celebrating the human body itself, the sexual pleasure that alone remained after the soul was eliminated. In this sense, his use of the shocking was both a way to jar the apathetic public and to point toward a new religion.

This paganism is especially evident in "Laus Veneris," Swinburne's rehandling of the Tannhäuser legend. In this poem the tragedy is that the knight who has renounced Christ believes in Him and the lover who has embraced Venus does not believe in her. Another poem that glorifies this pagan outlook is "Hymn to Proserpine," in which the speaker, a pagan of A.D. 313 when Christianity was proclaimed to be the state religion, bitterly laments the passing of pagan sensuality and predicts an eventual collapse of Christianity.

The glorification of sensuality, however, leads Swinburne into still another characteristic theme: if sexual ecstasy is truly to be the height of human existence, mankind must be free from all restraints. In the bitter "St. Dorothy" the chaste virgin and her lover die horrible deaths because they are trapped by the

restraints of Christianity, and in "The Masque of Queen Barsabe" (a "miracle play" about David, Bathsheba, and Nathan) the prophet is forced to admit that the adulterous queen is right. Related to this desire for sexual freedom is Swinburne's adoration of the prostitute. In "Dolores," the peak of Swinburne's masochistic eroticism, the prostitute is "Our Lady of Pain," a semi-goddess who gives the worshipper an excessive pleasure of suffering. "Faustine," addressed to another prostitute, revels in the pleasure of damnation, a pleasure that only a masochist could enjoy. Sadistic love is the theme of "Satia Te Sanguine" ("Sate thyself with blood") and "The Leper," in which the lover has the sadistic pleasure of coldly watching his beloved while she is slowly consumed by a fatal disease.

Sensuality, however, would lack much of its charm to Swinburne if it were a permanent state; thus he places it within a world that is characterized above all by the passing of time. "Ilicet" ("Let us go") is a lament for this passing of time, and "The Triumph of Time," as its title implies, laments the mutability of human existence and the inevitable ending to love. "Before Parting" and "Before Dawn" are further laments for the ending of love. Related to these poems are the two eulogies, "In Memory of Walter Savage Landor" and "To Victor Hugo," both of which rather sentimentally note the transience of human life. In contrast to the sentimentality of these eulogies are the two grotesque ballads "After Death" and "The Bloody Son," which present realistic pictures of death. But this view is the exception in Swinburne's poetry; the number of poems which have a yearning to die far outnumber the realistic ones. In "The Garden of Proserpine," for example, the weariness of life is contrasted with the peaceful rest of death, and in "Hendecasyllabics" the speaker seeks rest from "the long decline of roses."

The Second Series of *Poems and Ballads* marks a change in Swinburne's

thought. No longer is he the outspoken rebel against Victorian conventionality. His tone has changed from nervous ranting and "naughty" excitement to a calm, sad strain, almost of lamentation. During the twelve years between the two series, Swinburne's friends—Rossetti, Meredith, and Jowett—had brought his attention to Elizabethan drama, and in the 1878 volume he published the lyrics that this study had produced.

Instead of the eroticism of 1866, the Second Series is obsessed with death, so much so that well over half of the fifty-five poems are either eulogies or laments. The theme of death can, in fact, be divided into three parts, each of which Swinburne describes: the death of famous men, the death of youth, and the death of nature. Some of the most remarkable poems in this volume are on the deaths of famous men: Barry Cornwall, Charles Baudelaire (the author of the very influential *Les Fleurs du Mal*), Théophile Gautier (one of Swinburne's favorite contemporaries), and Victor Hugo (the leading exponent of French Romanticism). In these poems Swinburne's concern is twofold: in each he laments the passing of a great poet, to him the crown of existence, and the defeat of a struggling, vivacious man by a force over which he has no control. This last concern partly relates him to the then growing movement of Naturalism, especially as interpreted by Zola, as well as to his own sense of futility that had already appeared in the 1866 volume. A second part of the theme of death deals with the death of nature and is the theme of what many people think is the best poem in the volume—"A Forsaken Garden." Here Swinburne laments the mutability of life and the decay that characterizes nature. Other poems related to this theme are "At a Month's End," "The Year of the Rose," and "Four Songs of Four Seasons"; in each, the poet observes the decay and death that are part of the world of nature. Finally there is a group of lyrics in which Swinburne laments the

death or the passing of youth and with youth the passing of love. "A Wasted Vigil" and "Age and Song," for example, show the inevitable decay of youth itself which, being caught up in the world of nature, must die even as nature dies.

The Second Series also reveals Swinburne's increased dependence upon and appreciation for Continental poetry, especially the mature poetry of Baudelaire and Gautier. More and more Swinburne concentrates on the sharply defined image or symbol as developed by these poets and takes his emphasis from the melodious line. But it is in the Third Series of *Poems and Ballads*, published in 1889, that Swinburne most shows the fruits of this influence. During 1879 he was so near death that his friends thought there was no hope for him, but Theodore Watts-Dunton rescued him and by caring for him with almost parental control nursed him back to health. The Third Series reflects this encounter with death and the reconciliation of the rebel to the middle class.

By far the least remarkable of the three volumes, the 1889 *Poems and Ballads* introduced a thread of patriotism that was hardly noticeable in Swinburne's work before this time. "The Commonweal," for example, extols the jubilee of Queen Victoria, an attitude that would have been inconceivable in the young Swinburne, and "The Armada" is an almost Tennysonian exaltation of English sea power. Also, there is now a more obvious attempt to rely on literary experiences rather than his own experiences for the source of his poetry. Especially striking are the echoes of Browning's "Caliban

upon Setebos" in "Caliban on Ariel" and of D. G. Rossetti's "Sister Helen" in "The Weary Wedding."

The most interesting poems in this otherwise mediocre volume are those lyrics capturing through fleeting but precise symbols moments that are as ephemeral but profound as those captured in words by Verlaine and Mallarmé. In these poems—"In Time of Mourning," for example, "The Interpreters," "The Recall," or "By Twilight"—Swinburne grasped the poetic vision that was fundamental to the French *Symbolistes* and would be of utmost importance in twentieth century lyrical poetry.

In the three series of *Poems and Ballads* Swinburne shows a profundity of thought expressed in a depth of emotion, a combination that easily accounts for his widespread influence on the poets who followed him. There are few forms of versification, however difficult, that do not appear in these pages. In his translations of François Villon and in his recreations of the early English ballad, he shows that translation and the meager ballad could be the vehicles of great art. In the sestinas and sonnets he shows that he has mastered the most difficult rhyme patterns. In fact, he shows a mastery in technical matters that is perhaps unmatched in English poetry. All in all, *Poems and Ballads* is one of the most unusual and most outstanding works of nineteenth century poetry, a publication that mocked its contemporaries with such art that it became a seminal work in the formation of the poetic theory of the following age.

POETRY AND TRUTH FROM MY OWN LIFE

Type of work: Autobiography

Author: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Time: 1749-1775

Locale: Frankfurt, Leipsic, and Strasbourg, in Germany

First published: 1811-1833

Principal personages:

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, the boy, the young man, the poet
CORNELIA GOETHE, his sister and confidante

JOHANN GEORGE SCHLOSSER, his friend, later his brother-in-law
 GRETTCHEN, Goethe's first love
 JOHANN GOTTFRIED VON HERDER, his mentor and greatest influence
 FREDERICA ELISABETHA BRION, his first mature love
 LILI SCHÖNEMANN, his betrothed, later estranged

While there is more truth than poetry in the romantic reminiscence of the aging Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben; Dichtung, und Wahrheit*, known to English readers as *Poetry and Truth from My Own Life*, was called by Thomas Mann one of the best and most interesting autobiographies in the world. He termed it a first-person novel revealing how genius grows, how good fortune and worth combine in happy circumstance, how personality develops.

Divided into three parts and twenty books, the autobiography was written between 1809 and 1831. If any theme binds the recollections together, it is most clearly represented by the many aspects of a poet's relations with the world around him. Goethe's method was to place a man against the backdrop of his time, showing how the world expands or holds back his growth, how he forms his conception of man from this world, and how; if he is a poet or a writer—an artist—he reflects his experience for others to view. Goethe finished the work in his last days, communicating his affections, his distinct impressions of his loved ones, and he used what he called a "magic mirror" to recall them and to aid in his interpretation of life and art.

Goethe refers to himself as the boy in the first section of the autobiography. He spent most of his childhood in his paternal grandmother's house, located in Frankfort-au-Main. Goethe tells us that in his youth he was influenced by his relatives. His grandmother gave the children a puppet theater one Christmas and thus initiated his life-long interest in drama. From his maternal grandfather he received his first interest in politics when he was allowed to visit state buildings with the old magistrate. His father, a lawyer of an analytical but cold disposi-

tion, had planned his son's education as preparation for a career in law, but it was to include also instruction in art, music, literature, languages, as well as logic and jurisprudence. From his lively and loving mother he was endowed with an interest in life and people, poetry and truth.

The French took over Frankfort when Frederick II threatened the German Confederation. This political misfortune, in the eyes of Goethe's father, became a fortunate happening for the young man, for an urbane soldier was billeted in the Goethe home. The two frequented the French theater, further developing Goethe's dramatic interests, and his intellectual horizon was enlarged by French literature in those formative years. To offset this influence, the boy and his sister Cornelia were instructed in English. Family reading and recitation as well as entertaining artists during the French occupation provided excitement which had a lasting influence. Contrary to their father's wishes, but under the encouraging eye of their mother, the children recited portions of Klopstock's verses.

Goethe participated in an innocent intrigue with Gretchen, a visiting beauty, and her cousins, who encouraged the love-sick adolescent to write occasional verses for hire on deaths, weddings, and other subjects. This parlor game, easy for the young genius, turned out to be involved with forgery and persuasion and not at all connected with art. During this time young Goethe innocently held hands, and once he was kissed on the forehead by the older Gretchen. His humiliation came when she announced that she felt only a sisterly affection for him. From this disgrace, he turned to the sympathetic companionship of his sister. In those years they became embarrassingly attached to each other.

As Michaelmas time approached after the sad affair with Gretchen, Goethe's thoughts turned toward the university he was to attend. He wanted to go to Göttingen, but his stern lawyer father had decided that his precocious son must go to law school at Leipsic. Goethe did not openly object, but he decided to spend a large part of his time studying human nature.

It was during this time that Goethe met many of the prominent writers and scholars of the day. He discusses, criticizes, and often gives personal insights into their characters. Goethe felt that the fear of breaking with tradition prohibited learning and expansion. He tired of the failure of his professors to stir his thoughts or learning processes. Other than his time spent with companions and learned men outside the academic life, Goethe was bored, and in 1768 he left school to recover from an illness.

His recuperation became pleasant, he states, not by the virtue of languishing health, but by mystical awakenings, prompted in part by philosophical discussions with an old family friend, Frau von Klettenberg, who helped him pass the time. Also, he took an interest in science and learned to play cards. He read many of the letters he had written home during his time at the university and was pleased for the most part with them.

One of the most influential events of the young Goethe's life occurred when he continued his studies for a law degree at Strasbourg and became, under Johann Herder, a critic, poet, and the leader of the *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*) movement which marked a season of literary revolution in Germany. At this time young Goethe became fully aware of Shakespeare. He discusses the playwright for a number of pages, talking about the different translations and at one time stating the possibility that Germans recognized the greatness of Shakespeare more than his own countrymen did. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* became reality when Goethe met such a

family and fell in love with the daughter, Frederica Brion, in the Alsatian vicarage of Sesenheim. Goethe wrote some of his most beautiful lyrics inspired by his first meeting with her. "Wanders Sturmlied" remains one of the best loved of his poems.

Goethe took his degree at Strasbourg on August 6, 1771, and on the following day Professor Schopflin died. Goethe tells us that this man had an important influence on his life. He takes the opportunity to give us a short biography of Schopflin's life and then digresses into a discussion of his various professors at Strasbourg and his reactions to them. When Goethe left Strasbourg he also left Frederica.

After Goethe's graduation he began to travel and he met many people who were to influence or strengthen his ideas. It was at this time that Johann Schlosser announced his intentions of marrying Goethe's sister. Goethe also spent some time with Herr von la Roche and his wife, talking about literature with their friends. Johann Merck and his family, whom Goethe met in the home of Herr von la Roche, became his traveling companions.

In these sections Goethe discusses his activities as a lawyer, the reforms that came about during this time, and the humane feelings that became prevalent in lawyers and judges. Also, he discusses his further involvement in drama and art. He tells of the publication of his works *The Accomplices* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. It was on the day of his sister's wedding that he decided to send off the manuscript of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* after holding it for a long time.

Goethe fell in love with Lili Schöne-mann after meeting her at a party. Her background was similar to the cultural life of the young lawyer, whose business often took him to her home and, with a group of young bohemians, to Offenbach for dinners, the opera, and theater. Their intimacy was immediate but prolonged when he went to court at Wertzler. Cornelia, rusticated in her mar-

riage, urged her brother to break off the affair. Lili also responded to pressures, and the young poet, now a celebrity as the author of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, decided to associate himself with the court of the young Duke and Duchess of Weimar. At this point *Poetry and Truth from My Own Life* ends.

The Intentional Fallacy, that canon of the New Critics, suggests that one should not strain for an author's purpose or, in a corollary, allow the author's own view to

obscure the work of art. In Goethe's work intent and viewpoint are clearly and truthfully marked, so close are the parallels to his great literary works, that there is a foreshadowing as well as an underscoring. The autobiography reveals a personality, but as Thomas Mann pointed out in his Introduction to *The Permanent Goethe*, the personality remains an enigma, a mystery of self, and not even Goethe has revealed it fully in his own life story.

THE POETRY OF "A.E."

Author: "A.E." (George William Russell, 1867-1935)

Principal published works: *Homeward: Songs by the Way*, 1894; *The Earth Breath*, 1897; *The Divine Vision*, 1904; *Collected Poems*, 1913; *Selected Poems*, 1935

The pseudonym under which George Russell published his poetry and by which he is known as the central figure in the Irish Renaissance was the accidental result of a printer's error: "AE" for "AEon," the pseudonym Russell used in an early contribution to *The Irish Theosophist*. His preference for the accidental nom-de-plume indicates the wide gulf between the practical Russell, agricultural reformer, and the visionary Russell, the leading Theosophist of late nineteenth century Dublin. It also shows that his poetry is the instrument of his philosophy.

Almost all of the previously published 188 poems in the *Collected Poems* of 1913 had appeared in *The Irish Theosophist* and few of them or the later poems in the *Selected Poems* of 1935 show any sign of Russell's daily work in organization, politics, journalism, or committees. Apart from his play *Deirdre*, published in 1902, there is little sign of Ireland in his poems; had there been he would have found a more obvious niche in the literary history of the Celtic Twilight and the Irish Renaissance, but his contribution there was to assist writers in a practical way and to inspire them theosophically; his poems reached the great world outside Dublin through Theosophist channels,

and thus in the 1890's Russell was more widely known than other Irish writers. When their unity as a movement became recognized, his influence declined.

To summarize Russell's poems as a hymnal of Theosophy is to abandon critical discussion of them, a difficulty that shadows the few commentaries on his work. The best is still Russell's own letters which reveal both the personality that played its part in the independence of Eire and the Irish Renaissance, and the visionary, particularly when he corresponded with Yeats. The stimulation provided by the Hermetic Society (without which at least the Celtic Twilight would not have occurred) is important to us as it affected Yeats, but it provided the whole substance of Russell's work. Both agreed in their dissatisfaction with provincial Ireland's "religions" of trade and banking and their belief that salvation would come through their different interpretations of such terms as "Holy Ireland." To Yeats it was holy by reason of its long history and its being his native land; to Russell, as he explained to a friend in 1901, it was just as "holy" as any other land that is a mother land, a source of life. The worst theosophical features of Russell's verse are that it is all

sweet, rarely concrete, and never comic, qualities that were a cause of further disagreement with Yeats.

Yeats in his attempt to recover the heroic Irish past made some degree of acquaintance with it a prerequisite to understanding his poems; but when Russell writes what he calls a "Mayo legend" in verse, "the story of one Caden More," no one would ever know there was a story in the poem or that its setting need be County Mayo. It begins with "a lonely road through bogland to the lake at Carrowmore" beside which lies someone sleeping. In the draft sent to Yeats in February, 1908, the poet gently rebukes the sleeper for dreaming of his love instead of using the opportunity of the dream to enter the real land of dreams (as it was to Russell); in the published version the speaker is one of the "faery" tribe but the central line in the two poems is identical: "'Tis the beauty of all Beauty that is calling for your love." The constant celebration of the other world in totally abstract terms debilitates Russell's poems, but for him it was their only function. The abstract was the place where his visions and his inner life came alive; hence this world was in many ways totally unreal to him. His most serious objection to Yeats is that the latter in his poetry persists in using objects from this so-called real world as active symbols of the other world; Russell subordinates the symbol to the abstraction in his "Symbolism":

We rise, but by the symbol charioted,
Through loved things rising up to
Love's own ways:

By these the soul unto the vast has
wings
And sets the seal celestial on all mortal
things.

"The seal celestial" is the abstraction "Love" or "Beauty."

Russell outlines his theosophy to Edward Dowden in a letter of August, 1894, answering the latter's objections to his abstractions in a review of Russell's

first volume. *Homeward: Songs by the Way*. Russell agrees that facts are necessary to the poem and to the mystic, but the less the better; by accumulation they simply oppress the Spirit which should try to free itself of them, as Russell quickly abandons a literal base in his poems. This release is available in language if we realize the spiritual potency of such abstract terms as "Love" and "Beauty." Despite his competent metrics Russell is not a poet but a Theosophist in verse, prose, and painting. He believed in the increasing presence of the informing Spirit he sometimes called "earth spirit" or "life spirit" or "Oversoul"; the individual soul was in reality a part of that Oversoul, a concept familiar enough in Transcendentalism and expressed in Russell's "Oversoul," sometimes titled "Krishna," with its epigraph from the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "I am Beauty itself among beautiful things."

The intensity and eccentricity of the spiritual life of this man of affairs, obvious in every poem, can be defined from his letters. He refers in a letter of 1886 to a drawing which came, as did all his drawings and poems, in a vision: "What it means I have not the slightest idea, but of course that does not make any difference." In writing to Oliver Elton in 1907 he argued from his own experience of dreams that they were meaningful because they bore no relation to what he knew in life; hence, a spirit must be speaking to him, and the work of the Theosophist was to "make this world into the likeness of the kingdom of light." In most of his verse Russell looks to rejoin the kingdom in space and time, rather than to realize it here. His faith in the movement of light or Truth from the abstract to the actual made him differ from Yeats's seeing the ideal in the real. It supported Russell in his daily organizational work and it made him the inspiration of the Celtic Twilight as a prophet of the dawning Renaissance, matters accounting for the significance of Theosophy and Russell in the origins of a na-

tional literary movement. He could actually see his faith demonstrated, as he reported to Yeats in 1896: "The gods have returned to Erin. . . . They have been seen by several in vision . . . it has been confirmed from other sources and we are likely to publish it. . . . To me enchantment and fairyland are real and no longer dreams."

He was expert in encouraging visions; he advised Ruth Pitter to close her eyes, darken her mental screen, visualize a gold ring on the black background, slowly enlarge it, and watch the picture taking form in the center of the ring. All his visions were of sweetness and light, and he is properly outraged (in a 1902 letter to Yeats) when a woman in the audience of his play *Deirdre* complained to the newspapers that she could see three "black waves of darkness rolling down over the stage and audience and it made her ill." His theosophy is summed up in the answer he gave to L. A. G. Strong when the latter asked for "a word of power"; he advised Strong to look for on earth the things he had found in heaven.

Between seeing the vision and finishing the poem there must have been crucial steps in craftsmanship and composition, but Russell's assertion of continued guidance, or inspiration from the Spirit World represents him simply as the divine instrument and makes it even more difficult to discuss his lyrics in analytic terms.

The versification of Russell's visions is obviously adequate to his purpose, so much so that further comment would be as fruitful as analyzing the versification

of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*; his verse visions conveyed his meaning and a succession of them induces an auto-intoxication that makes the senses swim and probably accounts for the extraordinary vogue of his three early volumes and his *Collected Poems* of 1913, a reception not accorded his *Selected Poems* in 1935. Interest in "A.E." today lies not in the urbanity or melody of his utterance but in the complexity of his guiding concepts; these generally lie outside the poem, as Yeats's *Vision* glosses the meaning of his poems, but in some cases can be grasped wholly within the poems, as in the paradoxical "Refuge." The "refuge" of the "driven fawn" lies on the hunter's breast; the "fawn" is twilight, the "hunter" night. Many of Russell's poems celebrate day and twilight when the outlines of the actual become nebulous (indicating the unreal nature of the actual) and the time of day serves as a crossover point between the opposites (real, unreal) that Russell worked in. Contemporary taste in the anthologies favors (besides complex ideas and dawn pictures) those poems in which the objects remain fairly concrete as in "Frolic," which pictures children and stars at play, rather than the little allegories such as "Three Counsellors."

We do not care as much as we should for Russell's undeniably beautiful verse because in the end he thought of it only as his contribution to the cause of Theosophy. He did not have the poet's dedication to his Muse as Yeats had; as the "Epilogue" to the *Collected Poems* shows, all his poetry is ephemeral.

THE POETRY OF AIKEN

Author: Conrad Aiken (1889-)

Principal published works: *Earth Triumphant and Other Tales in Verse*, 1914; *A Jig of Forslin*, 1916; *Turns and Movies, and Other Tales in Verse*, 1916; *The Charnel Rose, Senlin: A Biography, and Other Poems*, 1918; *Punch: The Immortal Liar*, 1921; *Priapus and the Pool*, 1922; *The Pilgrimage of Festus*, 1923; *Senlin: A Biography*, 1925; *Prelude*, 1929; *John Deth: A Metaphysical Legend, and Other Poems*, 1930; *Preludes for Memnon*, 1931; *The Coming Forth by Day of Osiris Jones*, 1931; *Landscape West of Eden*, 1934; *Time in the Rock: Preludes to Definition*, 1936; *And in the Human Heart*, 1940;

Brownstone Eclogues and Other Poems, 1942; *The Soldier: A Poem*, 1944; *The Kid*, 1947; *Skylight One: Fifteen Poems*, 1949; *Collected Poems*, 1953; *A Letter from Li Po and Other Poems*, 1955; *Sheepfold Hill: Fifteen Poems*, 1958; *Selected Poems*, 1961

A variety of qualities accounts for the complexity of Conrad Aiken's poetry: eclecticism, mysticism, prolixity, diffusiveness, suggestiveness by implication, and, above all, a sophisticated philosophical and psychological concern. His purview may at times seem paradoxical, for he is romantic as well as classical, stoic and epicurean, optimistic and doom-stricken, joyous and despairing, assertive and diffident. Whatever his mood, his humane regard for man's fate, along with his refusal to shrink from harsh reality, is impressive. Through all these qualities flicker the familiar gleams of his poetic inspirations. Aiken has freely and admittedly been influenced by Shakespeare, Joyce, Pound, Poe, Masters, Robinson, Eliot, Blake, Keats, and the nineteenth century Transcendentalists, to say nothing of Freud, Jung, and Krafft-Ebing.

Technically speaking, insofar as it is possible to divorce technique and substance, Aiken is usually unexceptional. By far his favorite prosodic form is blank verse, befitting of course his epic intents; this form is punctuated by cacophonies, metric irregularities, and free rhythms which provide variety of movement and counterpoint. His use of tetrameter couplets is frequent and he imitates the Shakespeare sonnet form in two sequences, "Sonnets," and "And in the Human Heart." He is not noteworthy for metrical experimentation save in his moving homage to García Lorca, "The Poet in Granada," the choral ode sections of "The Coming Forth by Day of Osiris Jones," and "The Soldier." Though no more original, his rhetoric is more interesting because of his frequent archaisms. Floridity and excessive abstractness abound, particularly in his early work, but all his poetry is singular for its use of such romantic or classical words as *gilding*, *lamia*, *perpend*, *cerulean*, *coruscation*, *sureate*, and *empyrean*. What at

first may seem a precious use of language is justified to some extent in descriptions of quasi-mythological kingdoms Aiken often envisions in his verse—worlds inhabited by such a real or imagined Everyman as Heliogabalus, Senlin, Festus, Forslin, and King Borborigimi. (His creation of personae, incidentally, a device he may have borrowed from Pound or Browning, is a perfect method for conveying his psychological delineations and projections.) Stylized metrics and rhetoric are only two of the features which cause some readers of Aiken's work to describe it, and not without some reason, as vague, sentimental, prolix, and blurred by a certain romantic "softness."

One of the most pleasing features of the Aiken style is its musicality. His phrasing, balance of lines, and alternation of rhythms prove his genius in manipulation of verbal sounds, and he employs such musicality to its greatest effect in the depiction of highly charged emotional experiences. Musical forms and instruments are constantly recurring synaesthetic images, symbols, and analogues. Aiken's fascination with music has affected the creation of his verse in an even more basic way. In structuring his poetry, he utilizes musical forms and techniques in the hopes of attaining special effects. He writes that one of his aims is to achieve effects of contrast in both theme and tone. Sections of his longest work, "The Divine Pilgrim," are meant to be, structurally, symphonic poems. Throughout his work, too, one finds leit-motifs, refrains, and repetitions which have the effect not only of the *déjà vu*, but of those subtle tonal and meaning changes involved in the recurrence of words in a different context which Gertrude Stein exploited.

Beyond these technical effects are the more important substantive results of this affinity for music. Dedicated to the no-

tion that his poetry should be suggestive of reality by means of implication, Aiken admits that he takes the evanescent, evocative aspects of emotions and things and on them, as in a series of delicate keys, plays a music that is elusive and fleeting in its overtones of improvisation and suggestion. Finally there is the simple belief of Aiken that more than any other, musical form resembles the processes of consciousness.

Aiken is, as he sees it, primarily concerned with the problem of personal identity which is for all men a life-long problem of perplexity. Thus his focus is double: upon conscious processes—stream-of-consciousness, projection, the objective-subjective duality and correspondence; and upon what the consciousness is most aware of—love and death, religion, and time. In *Preludes for Memnon* he asks about self-knowledge.

A true knowledge of the self requires awareness of subconscious structure and motivation in the Freudian sense. Aiken's psychological modernity is made clear by his constant imagistic references to the mind and its hidden features as a room, a house, a city, the sea, and a puppet stage peopled with fantasies. On the one hand man is faced with the seemingly inexorable distinction between subjective (the microcosm) and objective (the macrocosm).

What can result is an agonizing solipsism of perception and self-knowledge. But utter subjectivity and the passage of time make the world seem unsubstantial and our existence but a dream.

Aiken's fondness for actors and other stage performers highlights his notations of the illusional aspects of experience; the psyches of his personae and his poetic version of stream of consciousness are his way of approximating the mysteries of subjectivism. On the other hand, in more expansive moments, the mind can experience a mystical exaltation wherein one becomes and is absorbed by all things. Ideally, however, one must learn all sides of inner truth.

Aiken is preoccupied with the human consciousness out of necessity as well as interest. In "The Charnel Rose" he writes that one must mold the world to shape or else be overwhelmed by it.

Aiken believes that what the modern consciousness faces is appalling. He is the humane poet who knows that sorrow is man's constant lot in life. Much of his verse, therefore, deals with suicide, murder, death, war, and the tedium of the commonplace, but his greatest source of disillusionment is the failure of love. The Everyman hero of "The Charnel Rose" is a nympholeptic who finds peace in mysticism only after discarding love that is prostituted, carnal, erotic, unrequited, vampirish, and adulterous. Love for him is violent, bloody, and spiritually unrewarding.

A search for love is actually nothing more than one symptom of man's historic need for an ideal in this materialistic world. The younger Aiken, in "The House of Dust," is more romantic and ultimately places his rather ambiguous faith in a belief that life cannot exist without purpose.

The later Aiken tends to have less faith in any superintending universal purpose and is more stoical about the human condition. But like the younger Aiken, the more mature poet advocates an epicurean relish for the substance of life, however transitory. There is in his poetry the traditional concern of seventeenth century pastoral poetry for *carpe diem*, though for Aiken the very passage of time is what chiefly lends an air of unreality to human existence. Memory can attempt a poor mental recreation of experience, but never really can revivify it.

Aiken's disillusionment with the failure of love is made all the more exasperating because love is the one redeeming experience in a world shorn of religious belief. Traditional religions are defunct. Hence several problems arise. Aiken asks, what exists in the world for man to admire. The existence of a universal purpose is questionable. The only solution

seems to be a far from satisfying spiritual solipsism which defeats the attempt to escape psychological subjectivity.

What results is not only denial of supernatural religion, but a relentless nihilism and the moral terror of a world without standards of good and evil. "Preludes for Memnon" is the most terrifying and negativistic of Aiken's poems in this re-

spect; his later views are less harsh.

As an artist, Aiken's greatest contribution is the presentation in poetic, often highly lyric, philosophic and memorable form, the psychological and epistemological dilemmas of the modern consciousness. His unique approach to verse prefigures the work of many postwar American poets.

THE POETRY OF ANACREON

Author: Anacreon (Born c.572 B.C.)

First transcribed: Sixth century B.C.

The historian Eusebius states that Anacreon of Teos, the lyric poet who wrote elegiac and iambic verse in the Ionic Greek dialect, flourished during the sixty-second Olympiad (B.C. 532-529). Many "Anacreontic" poems are really later imitations of his work erroneously attributed to Anacreon after his death. Erotic love, not necessarily heterosexual, is one of his main themes, as in his short poem, "I lust for Cleobulus, I am mad for Cleobulus, I gaze at Cleobulus." He sings customarily of the pleasures of the senses as he says in a fragment that "children must love me for my words and my songs seeing that I sing pretty things and know how to say pretty things." In one iambic poem he compares a love affair to training a horse in a manner similar to that of Ovid in his *Ars Amatoria*, treating love as a game,

Why do you look at me sideways, my Thracian filly, and flee from me so resolutely as though I knew nothing of my art? You know that I could bridle you properly and take rein and ride you right about the turning post of the course. But instead you graze in the meadows and frolic; because you lack a clever breaker to ride you.

Fragments of drinking songs make up a large part of his work. When love eludes him ("But pledge me, dear, your slender thighs"), he turns to gallant drinking: "So I held the glass and drained it to the blond Erxion."

On such a man old age weighs heavily. Sometimes he begs: "Listen, girl with pretty hair and golden dress, to an old man's prayer." Once he elaborates on the evils of growing old:

My temples have grown gray and my head bare and white and graceful youth has left me. My teeth are the teeth of an old man. There is left me only a short space of dear life. And so I often moan for fear of Hell. Dire is the dark grip of Death and deep is the road down. There is no road up.

But there is a serious strain to some of his work and he knows manly virtue when he sees it. So he praises the brave Agathon, "who died for Abdera and was mourned at his pyre by all the town; for the blood loving God of War never slew in the swirl of battle such a youth as he." On the other hand, he knows the unmanly and the affected for what it is. So he derides the "litter rider Artemon" who

wore Cimmerian headdress with decorations in his ears and about his ribs the hairy oxhide cover of a dirty shield—the scoundrel Artemon who made a fraudulent living by consorting with bread wenches and whores, with his neck frequently tied to the whipping stock or the wheel and his back burned with the leather whip and his hair and beard pulled out. Now he rides in a coach wearing gold earrings fit for a fairy and carries a dainty ivory sunshade.

Although there is an evident system of values in Anacreon's work, he would be unhappy if he were remembered as a serious moralist. He would prefer, perhaps, his own description: "I cannot bear the

drinker who talks of battles and the misfortunes of war when he is drinking, rather think about happy things by mixing the art of the Muses and the splendid gifts of the Goddess of Love."

THE POETRY OF ANDRÉ BRETON

Author: André Breton (1896-1966)

Principal published works: *Magnetic Fields*, 1921; *The White-haired Revolver*, 1932; *Air and Water*, 1934

A medical student before World War I began, André Breton was conscripted in 1915. After spending a short time in the artillery, he was attached to a French army psychiatric unit and seems to have become interested in Freud and psychoanalysis at that time. During the war he was to come into contact with two other poets, Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard, who for some time were collaborators in the elaboration of Surrealist doctrines. Some parallels between Breton and Guillaume Apollinaire might also be traced back to the years of the war. After corresponding with the author of *Alcools* and *Calligrammes* for some months, Breton went to see him in 1916. The very term Surrealism seems to have been invented and first used by Apollinaire about 1917.

By 1925, André Breton was firmly established as the recognized leader of Surrealism and had shown himself quite capable of exercising a strict control over the movement. To his functions as a leader were added those of a theoretician. Indeed, it was Breton who over the years largely worked out and established the fundamental Surrealist doctrines. He was continually to assert the completeness of the Surrealist philosophy, its quasi-religious character, its demands, and the permanent effects it had on its adherents.

Although Breton had considerable sympathy for Communist ideals, he maintained that Surrealism could not acknowledge any outside political control. This advocacy of complete liberty with regard to the Communist Party was even-

tually to bring about a split between Breton on the one hand and Aragon and Eluard on the other. The latter were both involved in the French Resistance in one way or another. Breton, at the time of World War II, fled to the United States, where he met some of his old friends or collaborators, among whom were Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, André Masson, and Marcel Duchamp.

When Breton died in 1966, at the age of seventy, he was still a controversial figure in France; the very mention of his name could provoke a variety of emotional reactions, with the possible exception of indifference. Thousands of students followed his coffin and silently paid their last respects. The slight attention that this event attracted in England and the United States seems strange and indeed regrettable.

Too often, the disparity between what Breton set out to do and what he in fact accomplished has been stressed. He did not change the world, though his intentions were to do so. Although his literary ambitions were only a small part of his total philosophy, it is probably for his influence on the course of literary history and for the intrinsic value of his better poems that he will be best remembered. In spite of his polemic activity in connection with or in opposition to the Communist Party, or his ideas about conscious objectors and the war in Algeria, Breton will probably never be given any substantial place in the history books. Even from a purely literary point of view, one might

almost regret that Breton's interests were not more exclusively literary. In addition, it would be difficult to identify any single poet whose production could be classified simply as Surrealist. Yet, after all the objections have been raised, it must be stated that Breton could be an outstanding poet, that his ideas did affect a large number of excellent poets, from Aragon to Eluard, Cocteau to Queneau. Perhaps the full extent of his influence is not yet properly appreciated. He does seem to have continued a liberation of poetry which began with the Romantics and was pursued by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and Apollinaire, among others.

Rimbaud, in "Sun and Flesh," and elsewhere, had pointed out the inadequacies of the human reason in any attempt to acquire a true comprehension of the world. Breton was to develop this claim into one of the bases of Surrealism and of his own poetry. For him, realism in its traditional sense was a contradiction in terms. He insisted that the logic apparent in the outside world was an illusion: the imposition of a view from the outside which quite ignored the world's very real richness and complexity. One of the first tasks of the poet as Breton describes it in *What Is Surrealism?* would be to reveal the true confusion at the base of all reality. The proper attitude of the poet wishing to perceive and communicate this reality would be one of naïve impressionability, a preparedness to be new in every circumstance, to allow the object viewed to impress itself upon him in all its fresh irrationality; he would not attempt to impose a false order, to regularize the vision so that it might be accommodated within his poem; rather, the language would have to accommodate itself to the vision.

In his best poems, Breton does achieve a remarkable free association of images which attains to a pristine freshness and originality without unduly shocking the reader; in them, too, the analogies and metaphors, though varied, and hard to explain rationally, seem to depend upon each other, and contribute to a total, uni-

fied impression: to achieve, in other words, a form of pure poetry for which Breton has not received sufficient credit.

In *Communicating Vases*, Breton declares that poetry may be found everywhere, and especially in the strangest of places, involving objects once held to be most alien to the art. Breton also affirms that poetry can exist without literary expression. Apollinaire had already suggested a similar idea, though in less cogent terms; and since the time of Marcel Duchamp, it is a belief which has opened up enormous possibilities of inspiration in painting, sculpture, and music. For Breton, one of the major objectives of the poet would then be to bring about a coincidence of his view of the object and of the poetry latent within it. The necessary degree of receptiveness or openness had, according to him, been inhibited or stifled by most forms of conventional education; the latter had taught the individual objectivity, accustomed him to a separation of subject and object, whereas all of Surrealism must tend toward a belief in the essential unity of the world.

In his *First Surrealist Manifesto*, published in 1924, and in *Second Surrealist Manifesto*, published in 1930, Breton lays down guide lines for the individual who wishes to start on a sort of apprenticeship to change or enrich his view of the world. The study of so-called mental sickness will offer many possibilities. The Surrealists were even to try to simulate conditions of insanity. Implicit in this aspect of Breton's pursuit of a new vision is the belief that the classical distinction made between mental health and sickness may no longer be safely assumed: they are complementary aspects of human, mental activity. Breton likewise refused to accept any dichotomy of the conscious and subconscious mind. He insisted on the value of automatic writing—an uncontrolled flow and free association—claiming that it not only allowed the poet to grasp the workings of the recesses of his mind but also let him perceive that its texture and movement were no different

from those of the outside world. Breton was frequently called upon to defend his faith in automatic writing, and he did so with conviction.

In addition to the investigation of mental sickness, and of automatic writing, Breton pointed out the usefulness of the study of dreams, with a view to the reconciliation of conscious and unconscious activities, as part of a greater plan to unify inner and external realities—dream and reality—into one absolute reality, or surreality.

Breton, needless to say, was attributing to the written word an importance that it had never before received. He was acutely conscious of its value as a kind of sixth sense, giving information about the world; he pointed out that it was not necessarily a simple, transparent symbol for the reality to which it referred. Endowed with an appeal to the eye as well as the ear, capable of unpredictable reactions in association with other words, it had a life all of its own, less innocent than was generally believed.

In substance, the ideas which Breton expressed in his manifestoes and elsewhere had already been proposed, or at least hinted at, by authors before him: Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Apollinaire. This fact does not detract, however, from his originality, for Breton codified these ideas, insisted upon them with more intensity than that shown by any poet up to his time, made their investigation his life's work and even his religion. He was quick to point out the need for a form of discipline and even asceticism on the part of the poet.

In his attempt to integrate or to re-integrate man into his proper place in the world, Breton was also proposing a philosophy of independence in the face of any type of rational control. His attempt at liberation was perhaps the most ambitious ever undertaken by a poet: for through poetry, in the wide sense that Breton conceived it, there would be a complete change in thought processes, in the way in which man looked at the

world, and in his very relations with it.

According to Breton, our normal, ordered, rational view of life was an illusion and a distortion. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that Breton would refuse the title of mystic and would assert the Surrealist's independence of any god. He placed his ideal categorically inside the world, not outside it. Paradoxically, though deeply aware of the mystery of life, he was anti-mystical. Though seeking unification, he did not seek one with God or a supernatural reality. Surreality involved for him a psyche-material or psycho-physical re-unification which would confirm and strengthen man's bonds with the earth, rather than loosen them.

In a literary context, Breton might understandably be criticized for not having been sufficiently concerned with literary values and considerations pure and simple. He was far from careless in the presentation of his poems: indeed, sometimes they seem so polished as to be cold. Nonetheless, it does seem that Breton can scarcely avoid the charge that some of his works lack the very direction and control which he was unwilling to impose upon them.

Through his intransigent advocacy of complete liberty, Breton cut himself off from the world of active commitment and positive action; for in these domains some compromise with existing conditions is required. Aragon and Eluard were only able to engage themselves physically, effectively, by severing their ties with Surrealism. In final analysis, Surrealism seemed condemned by its very ambition and purity to remain a literary or artistic expression.

When Breton's real influence, as opposed to his aspirations, is measured, it will perhaps be realized outside of Continental Europe, as well as inside, that Surrealism should not be comfortably ignored or dismissed without any real consideration of the ideas it helped spread.

THE POETRY OF APOLLINAIRE

Author: Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918)

Principal published works: *Alcools*, 1913 (*Alcohols*); *Calligrammes*, 1918

The natural son of a Polish adventurer and an Italian officer, Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitski, known in literature as Guillaume Apollinaire, spent most of his childhood in Monaco and the South of France. By 1899, when he was nineteen, he had come to Paris. Before his death in 1918, Apollinaire had become one of the most remarkable leaders of the young intellectual movements in the capital. In one way or another he contributed to Fauvism, to Cubism and even to Surrealism. He helped, moreover, to establish the reputation of the painter Henri Rousseau.

Apollinaire's *Alcools*, a collection of poems published in 1913, contains works that span the years 1898 to 1912. It is hard to find a real thematic or formal unity within this collection. The title seems to express the poet's thirst for vivid sensation and experience, as well as his remarkable impressionability.

The choice of the rather long poem "Zone" as the first in the 1913 collection seems surprising. It was not Apollinaire's original selection for this place. The themes and aesthetic it seems to contain are scarcely characteristic. Perhaps an explanation may be sought in the very element of surprise, which was an essential part of Apollinaire's poetic technique.

"Zone" and several other pieces in *Alcools* may justifiably be compared with cubist paintings by artists such as Delaunay. There is the same prismatic view of the world, the juxtaposition of apparently disparate elements, the attempt to offer several views from different angles simultaneously. A contrapuntal or polyphonic effect in "Zone," as in other pieces, seems to be furthered by Apollinaire's complete suppression of punctuation from the collection. This effect introduces a constant element of ambiguity, necessitating a careful reading, and often

a rereading, which helps to immerse the reader in the atmosphere of the poem. Apollinaire, when he used punctuation, showed himself to have a faulty knowledge of it; he was later to become skilled in not using it. The reader always has the impression of helping to re-create the poem when he reads it. Moreover, Apollinaire scarcely supplies a convenient, easy framework from the point of view of line or stanza length. These vary enormously.

The opening lines of "Zone" situate its mood, if not its true time or location. The poem is ostensibly a lament for excessive devotion to the past, and Apollinaire's introduction of the Eiffel Tower, automobiles, and precise, proper names is pointedly topical. But there is a much deeper theme and unity in the form of a quest by the poet. Unhappy in love, he seems to search in vain for some consolation. The mood remains nostalgic or unhappy. Walking through Paris, he has the impression that he is cast in the role of unhappy lover, as if this unhappiness has developed into a pattern, a consciousness of a life lived in frenzy and waste. With a technique very similar to that of the flashback in the cinema, the language seems to dissolve into a series of images as the poet reviews the places he has visited. Viewing himself as object, then speaking as the subject of the description, passing from second to first person, then combining the two, the poet achieves a remarkable fusion of past and present time, the overall effect of which is a sense of complete failure.

Apollinaire's influence on the later Surrealist movement cannot be doubted. Examples of parallels are numerous. "Zone," like many other pieces, suggests the presence of beauty and poetry as a latent quality in the most unconventional objects. Street scenes in Paris with cafés

and streetcars, the Eiffel Tower, police thrillers: these are a few of the manifestations of the French scene in Apollinaire's day around which he could shape his poetry.

André Breton was later to assert that poetry was contained within objects which up to his time had been held to be alien to the art. Apollinaire would have agreed. The latter did not hesitate to intersperse snatches of conversation with a nostalgic lament or part of a popular song. In at least one poem, "The Pretty Redhead," Apollinaire's stated ambition is no less enormous than that of André Breton and indeed could easily find a place inside one of the Surrealist manifestoes.

It would be quite wrong to cast Apollinaire simply as a poet-explorer or the virtuoso playing with words. Many critics would even claim that his essential talent is lyrical, and it is true that there is a peculiar poignancy about his laments for love lost or the passage of time, two of the permanent subjects of poetry.

In "Mirabeau Bridge," Apollinaire offers the reader the simplest of situations: a bridge over the Seine, with someone looking into the water. Though the external description is slight, the reader can easily project himself into the situation. Almost everything in the poem suggests movement. The flow of the river evokes the successive moods of love, the passing of time. Yet the poet is left behind, alone. When he tries to establish a parallel between the bridge and the lovers, to suggest a possible permanence in love, the attempt fails. Love is shown to disappear, like the waters of the river.

The third piece in *Alcools* is a long poem in several movements entitled "The Song of the Ill-beloved." In it Apollinaire displays his ready acceptance of the world, his openness and receptiveness, and with them his vulnerability. The poem is often ambiguous. It has love as its theme, but love made noticeable through its absence and the poet's memory of it rather than through any form

of fulfillment. The opening stanza prepares the reader for the mysterious, unreal atmosphere of the poem, similar here to that conjured up in the thrillers of the period. In the image of a young hoodlum appearing in the fog of a London evening Apollinaire creates an aura of mystery which makes anything seem possible. He communicates a sense of immediacy, so that each description comes vividly to life. For each mood, each idea, the poet immediately offers an image. A memory is no sooner called up than it fills the poem, temporarily changing its direction. Yet a single thread does run through the poem, a strain of melancholy involving a return to present reality from memories of springtime and love. The final stanza reasserts the poet's awareness of his role as the one who captures memories and sings them, who makes of his experience a pattern, a ritual, a song that can be passed on to others.

Unlike *Alcools*, *Calligrammes*, Apollinaire's other outstanding collection, seems to present the poems chiefly in the order in which they were written. This collection, appearing in 1918, contains pieces by the poet from the years 1912 to 1917. It has acquired considerable notoriety inside France. The first section (there are six sections in all) is called *Waves* and is remarkable for its enthusiasm, verve, and freshness. It comprises poems written before the outbreak of war in 1914. It is especially well known for Apollinaire's use of the conversation poem. One of the finest illustrations of this technique may be found in "Mouday in the rue Christine." This piece seems to have been written in a small café in Paris. It might be described as prismatic in form. Apollinaire encloses within irregular stanzas different snatches of conversation, each occupying a line or part of a line, accompanied by the reproduction of sounds one might hear in a café, and a meager description. It is not a pretentious poem, aspiring to great heights or higher realities, but rather one in which the poet's humor is manifest.

Apollinaire first thought of the name lyrical ideograms for the 1918 collection before deciding on the title *Calligrammes*, which does seem more suited to the nature of the work. The poet's typographical experimentation ranges from the simplest arrangement of words on the page: from the falling of rain in "It is raining," for example, to fairly complex, kaleidoscopic patterns, as is the case with "Ocean-letter." Generally speaking, the simplest pieces, in which the lyrical qualities of the words find their echo in a graceful form, are the most effective. In all of them, a great degree of co-operation on the part of the reader is required. However, the reader who is familiar with the innovations of artists in other areas—with those of Marcel Duchamp, for example—will not be unduly shocked; rather he will endeavor to judge each poem on its own merits. Moreover, seen in historical perspective Apollinaire's ex-

periments do not seem excessive. Even Baudelaire and, before him Nerval, seem to have been conscious of the importance of the appearance of words on the page, while the Symbolists, especially Mallarmé, explored and turned to good use the possibilities of typography.

Better, perhaps, than any other poet in the early twentieth century, Apollinaire was able to translate the eclectic, anxious consciousness of men of his time: the awareness of tradition, the desire for change. In Apollinaire, the Romantics' rediscovery of the dual nature of man, angel and beast, body and soul, the *homo duplex* of Christian terminology, gives way to a more complex concept. For Apollinaire reveals the *homo multiplex*, the man of manifold aspirations and moods which often co-exist simultaneously within him. The apparent disorder of this consciousness is reflected in the presentation of the poems.

THE POETRY OF ARNOLD

Author: Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

First published: *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, 1849; *Empedocles on Etna*, 1852; *Poems*, 1853; *Poems: Second Series*, 1854; *Merope: A Tragedy*, 1857; *New Poems*, 1867; *Poems, Collected Edition*, 1869

Matthew Arnold has often been called "the forgotten Victorian," and it is certainly true that his poetry is much less read than that of his two great contemporaries, Tennyson and Browning. Their vast productivity tends, as it did a century ago, to overshadow his rather modest accomplishment. For even if we include his two prize poems written at Rugby and at Oxford, we find that his total adult production amounts to only 129 poems, none of exceptional length by Victorian standards. "Empedocles on Etna," one of his longest, is less than a thousand lines. Also, after the publication in 1867 of his *New Poems*, when he was only forty-five, Arnold wrote very little poetry. He turned more and more to prose, and his increasing fame as a critic of literature and of society soon drove his poetic

achievement into the background, so that to modern readers he is familiar, if at all, only through a few standard anthology pieces, such as "Dover Beach" and "The Scholar-Gypsy." Yet it has become almost a critical platitude to say that Arnold's poetry, in its intellectual content, is much closer to the modern mind than is that of either Tennyson or Browning.

Arnold was quite aware of the limited audience to which his poetry appealed. In 1858 he wrote to his sister, complaining that the lack of public appreciation of his work deprived him of the stimulus needed for creative effort. To write poetry with the high quality of both content and craftsmanship that he demanded of himself was, he said, an "actual tearing of oneself to pieces"; moreover, his position as an inspector of schools did not allow

him the time he needed for the writing of verse. He knew also that he lacked many of the qualities possessed by Tennyson and Browning that made them so widely popular; he did not have Browning's intellectual vigor or Tennyson's musical skill. He was not capable of the strenuous affirmations of the later Browning or of the final struggle to faith that Tennyson achieved in *In Memoriam*. He had only the "gray elegiac mood," and this was not calculated to make a writer popular in nineteenth century England or America. There were Browning Societies everywhere in the English-speaking world, and Tennyson became a national institution. Arnold was ignored except by an intellectual elite.

The demands that Arnold made of poetry were high. In *The Study of Poetry* (1850) he wrote: "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will remain incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." Poetry must have "high seriousness"; it must be "a criticism of life"; it must exhibit "the application of ideas to life." All of this is asking a great deal of poetry, perhaps asking more than it is capable of accomplishing. To expect that poetry will take the place of religion—even of "what now passes for religion"—is to place upon the poet an intolerable burden. Yet the question of religion is one that goes straight to the center of Arnold's poetry and of his intellectual and religious predicament.

Like so many of his contemporaries, Arnold had been reared in the liberal Protestantism of the early part of the nineteenth century and had, upon reaching his middle years, found this faith to be completely unsatisfactory. At Oxford he had been exposed to Newman's Tractarian Movement but had been little affected by it, perhaps because of the Low Church tradition of his youth. The crucial point in his whole religious situ-

ations may be found in the famous lines from "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse":

Wandering between two worlds, one
dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head . . .

In the Carthusian monastery, Arnold caught a glimpse of a faith that strangely attracted him but which his Protestant upbringing made him instinctively regard as anachronistic, as a fossilized relic of a dead past. Yet he could find no new faith to take the place of that which he had lost, for modern men have not yet found the answer:

Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb;
Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

It was his awareness of the spiritual dilemma created by the ebbing of traditional religious faith that brings Arnold so close to the modern mind. Tennyson wrestled with the problem of faith and doubt in *In Memoriam* and finally attained to a trust in "the truths that never can be proved"; but Arnold could hear only the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" as the sea of faith, which had once encircled the whole world, slowly retreated like the ebbing tide at night. He saw nothing to fill the vacuum thus created and took refuge in a kind of Stoic detachment and resignation that find expression in the last stanza of Empedocles' song:

I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human effort scope.
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope;
Because thou must not dream,
Thou need'st not then despair!

We must, therefore, accept life as it is, must strive "to be *in* the world but not *of* it," neither hoping nor fearing overmuch.

This attitude of detachment and resignation gives to Arnold's poetry a curiously negative quality that is at once apparent to the reader. His view of life permitted no deep emotional involvement: for example, the poems to Marguerite are certainly the most tepid love poems ever written by a great poet, and it is significant that even today the identity of the woman to whom they were addressed remains a mystery. In "Thyrsis," his elegy on his friend Clough and a poem of great beauty in its description of the English countryside, Clough always remains a shadowy, retreating ghost; never does the poet feel, as did Tennyson, that "the living soul was flash'd on mine." Instead, Clough has faded into classical mythology, leaving for Arnold "that lonely tree against the western sky." Yet for verbal beauty "Thyrsis" is rivaled in the English language only by "Lycidas."

In many respects Arnold resembles T. S. Eliot, and perhaps this resemblance explains why Eliot did not care greatly for Arnold's poetry. But whether his withdrawn attitude was the result of an inward weakness or of Arnold's dislike of his own age, it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty. That he despaired of the world he saw around him is sufficiently obvious; few of his lines are more often quoted than these from "The Scholar-Gypsy":

... this strange disease of modern life,

With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts . . .

It was from the ugliness and the materialism of the world of the Philistines that he withdrew, to seek what solace he could find in the calm, dispassionate world of the classics.

Yet it is equally clear that Arnold felt the lack of something positive in his own nature, for like most men of his time he had a great sense of responsibility. Obviously, he longed for the decisive force of his father, the famous Headmaster of

Rugby and a representative of an older, more confident generation. In "Rugby Chapel," his elegy for Thomas Arnold, dead these fifteen or more years, the poet sought to express what he considered the essence of his father's greatness: "that he was not only a good man saving his soul by righteousness, but that he carried so many others along with him in his hand, and saved them . . ." Or, as he contrasted the two generations in his poem:

Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all around me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

In recent years there have been attempts to psychoanalyze the conclusion to "Sohrab and Rustum" in an effort to find in the poet's mind some record of a subconscious conflict between son and father. Such an interpretation seems unnecessary. One of the chief marks of the Victorian age was its haunting sense of "something lost"; in its own endless questionings it looked back with regret to an earlier time when traditional values seemed, at least in retrospect, to have been unquestioned. To Arnold, his father was one of those giants of old days which the mid-nineteenth century could no longer produce.

Arnold's poetry has not fared too well at the hands of modern critics. T. S. Eliot, as influential in our time as was Arnold in his, considered him an academic poet whose verse had little technical interest. He has not had the influence on modern poetry that Browning, at least with his dramatic monologues, has exercised, nor has he experienced the revival of popularity accorded to Tennyson. He still remains "the forgotten Victorian." But he has much to say that is applicable to the contemporary situation, for all of the ills that he so clearly saw in nineteenth century England have been aggra-

vated in the passage of a hundred years. His famous description of the "darkling plain" is even more appropriate today, and the lines from "The Scholar-Gypsy" might well be written of modern men:

Of whom each strives, nor knows
for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not like thee,
in hope.

THE POETRY OF BARKER

Author: George Barker (1913-)

Principal published works: *Thirty Preliminary Poems*, 1933; *Poems*, 1935; *Calamiterror*, 1937; *Lament and Triumph*, 1940; *Selected Poems*, 1941; *Sacred and Secular Elegies*, 1943; *Eros in Dogma*, 1944; *Love Poems*, 1947; *News of the World*, 1950; *The True Confession of George Barker*, 1950; *A Vision of Beasts and Gods*, 1954; *Collected Poems*, 1930-1955, 1957; *The View from ■ Blind I*, 1962; *Collected Poems*, 1930-1965, 1965

George Barker's deliberately anti-poetic autobiographical poem, *The True Confession of George Barker* is the most forceful single expression of his independent sensibility, but his *Collected Poems*, 1930-1965 is the best single text for an understanding of his moral and technical achievement. Selections from his earlier books are organized chronologically in the *Collected Poems*, where the sequence in itself demonstrates that Barker, like Thomas Hardy, is not the kind of poet who develops; rather, his methods, insights, and themes re-occur and he has mined a narrow but deep poetic vein throughout his career. He was the youngest poet chosen by W. B. Yeats for inclusion in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* and even then, in 1936, when he was only twenty-three, he had found his definitive style, so that the poems published in the mid-1930's are very like those published by *The New Yorker* and *Poetry* in the mid-1950's. There is little change in the technique of clustering images, for the same obsessions with swans, wombs, bowels, kisses, and the violence of sex and war return again and again with little advance in control. Throughout Barker's career he re-encounters and explores again the personal themes of grief, violence, human extremity, and the saving power of unified sensibility.

Barker is similar to Dylan Thomas and Hart Crane in attempting to explore, as it

were from inside, a host of images. If the single most important structural unit of Romantic poetry is the image, Barker—who has memorably described his mother in a London air raid bravely moving "from mourning into morning"—is a poet in the main line of the Romantic tradition. Yet in spite of this general kinship with "Dionysian" writers Barker has written no manifestoes and joined no schools. As a young man he kept aloof from the social poetry of Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, MacNeice; and by the same triumph of isolated sensibility he still keeps his distance from literary fashion.

Barker has commented on the words he offers in trade for bed and board; it would appear that the poet who regards himself as the explorer, and the prophet, of unconscious and profoundly personal images resigns himself to facing the charges of obscurity, provincialism, isolation. Certainly Barker prefers depth to clarity and is willing to pay the price.

Such a poet divides the world into opposing forces, condemning whatever makes for death and sacramentally celebrating what makes for life. Taking Blake as his master, Barker assumes that whatever is mechanical is evil; thus whatever inverts or besmirches the numinous loveliness of sexual love, genuine belief, or free intelligence must be attacked. Because control in life as in writing is ■ form of imprisonment, Barker can even

praise an American poet, Allen Ginsberg, for his ranting at this moment in history. Barker's recent poems on the United States muster a magnificent rhetoric of rejection, while the poems from a visit to Italy are written in praise of traditional sanctities.

In "Stanzas on a Visit to Longleat House in Wiltshire, October 1953," Barker praises the ceremony and largesse of the great country house—but indirectly, by a description of its present debasement as an open house of the National Trust. Rather similarly, praising the free moral intelligence, Barker can honor T. S. Eliot. There is a desperate audacity in Barker's frequent assertion that poets may correct the actual world.

A division of the human experience into opposed extremes is mediated in Barker's writing by the tension of opposites, by a dazzling conflict of images. Barker's real distinction lies in his setting in motion a logic of images in a fine poem: the long cycles of love poems and of sacred and secular elegies have as their principle of construction the juxtaposing of abstract and concrete, of seriousness and levity. In the otherwise turgid "Calamiteror," the frequent recurrence of specific place names—Wyoming, Lincolnshire, Asturias—within an abstract and luxuriant setting of multiple images, affords this effect of tension and complexity. The same effect is achieved with the names of historical figures from Cromwell to Chamberlain in "Secular Elegy II," in which Barker describes the aftermath of war in images of gross and grotesque sexuality. Often his perception of the incongruity, the bestiality, of sexual love is conveyed by graphic imagery.

At his most characteristic, Barker dwells upon the violence of war and love, and even in his religious poetry his tendency is to upbraid God, to shock the reader into a perception. In the "Holy Poems" Barker speaks of God as a thunderous cowboy riding on his shoulder.

A general tendency to pursue images

so intently leads to poetical atomism, to superb individual lines and stanzas but not whole poems. There are lines no one would want to miss, but "Channel Crossing," "At the Wake of Dylan Thomas," "A Sparrow's Feather," and a few others are the only whole poems in the lot. Barker seems at his best when he possesses a leading subject to control his Elizabethan splendor of imagery: when, for instance, he is writing descriptively, as in "On a Friend's Escape from Drowning off the Norfolk Coast."

There is also considerable focus when he is speaking of a writer he admires, as in the elegies on Thomas, Eliot, and MacNeice; and when, as in "Nine Beatitudes to Denver," he has a specific evil to describe and condemn. Barker has never given over rhyming despite his hatred of forms and controls, and he is at times a master of the short lyric stanza.

It is his very extravagance of imagery and wrenching of syntax and unabsorbed exotic vocabulary that works against Barker rather than for him. The poems tend to be more ornamental than coherent, and often his ornaments consist of disastrous puns, of the silly use of the invocation "O" in many poems, or of uncritical lapses of tone. Obsession with extremes of feeling perhaps prevents Barker from forging a coherent imaginative vision of the world and of human life. Surely those of his lines which are impenetrable seem like indications that the quest for meaning has failed—that the poem has not made enough order. Barker is, then, an uneven poet, a writer whose frequent lack of control is the outward sign of a lack of personal integration. Yet his superabundance of images possesses an exuberance and a very non-English (and non-American) quality of strangeness, something which is a natural dialectic counterpart to the alternative tradition of sincerity, of lucidity, which runs from Wordsworth down to Robert Frost and Philip Larkin in our own day.

THE POETRY OF BEDDOES

Author: Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849)

Principal published works: *The Brides' Tragedy*, 1822; *Death's Jest-Book*, 1850; *Poems*, 1851

The life and works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes were failures of which he is largely the cause. His life was spent as a perpetual medical student, even after he qualified for his degree at universities in Germany and Switzerland; he ended it by poison at the age of forty-five.

Apart from two books of juvenile poems Beddoes published only one work in his lifetime, *The Brides' Tragedy*, which made him a best-seller in London when he was a nineteen-year-old undergraduate at Oxford. Early success with this poetical drama suggested to him the notion of "reviving" the English drama, a desire shared by many English writers between the successes of Dryden and W. B. Yeats or T. S. Eliot—witness the impossible verse dramas of Wordsworth, Shelley, Browning, Tennyson, Hardy. The shadow of Shakespeare and the Elizabethans lay long across the centuries, but unlike the Elizabethans the great English poets had very little practical experience of the stage. Thus it is that Beddoes' two most complete works are verse dramas, *The Brides' Tragedy* and *Death's Jest-Book*, which he completed in the four years ending in 1828 and spent the rest of his life revising.

Beddoes enjoyed a competent income all his life and suffered no attachments; he seems to have spent his years on the Continent, between 1825 and 1848, as a graduate student and political radical; a favorable rate of exchange and the reputation of a free Englishman made him a well-known figure among students and the secret police abroad. He seems to have been fortunate in his friends, especially his literary executor, Thomas Forbes Kelsall, but to have suffered a grand dyspepsia for life, of which he was thoroughly conscious:

For death is more "a jest" than Life,
you see
Contempt grows quick from familiarity,
. . . Few, I know,
Can bear to sit at my board when I
show
The wretchedness and folly of man's
all
And laugh myself right heartily.

Beddoes' long self-exile is perhaps the clearest indication of his malaise and the cause of his fragmentary work: he was unable to grasp the realities of life around him. A gentleman, a student, a foreigner, he sought an effective means of communication in a totally unrealistic medium, the poetic drama. Having little to say and no way of saying it, he turned ever inward, exploring his own melancholy and recording it in an outworn medium he acquired not from the stage but from books.

But for all this perversity, eccentricity, and tragedy, no anthology of nineteenth century English poetry can afford to omit a least two of Beddoes' lyrics: "Old Adam, the carrion crow" from the final scene of *Death's Jest-Book*, and "Dream-Pedlary" from *The Ivory Gate*, the title of a collection of the poems written on the Continent. Remote as he was from the country of his speech, the events and literature of his time, that may have been the pre-condition of his unique tone, which escapes finer definition as does that of his place in English literature. The situations of his lyrics are always slightly freakish, for it is the style that marks their individuality. Along with much conventional language there are turns in the lines that can only be crass or inspired phrasing:

And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather. . .

The second line is ironic and realistic. This is the effect Beddoes was always trying to bring off, a *danse macabre* in polka time which forces his lines to try to outdo one another often in a succession of compounds. When the inspiration fails, crassness results. These terrible alternatives are more or less described in the words of Wolfram which introduce the lyric:

When I am sick o' mornings,
With a horn-spoon tinkling my por-
ridge-pot,
'Tis a brave ballad: but in Bacchanal
night,
O'er wine, red, black, or purple-
bubbling wine,
That takes a man by the brain and
whirls him round,
By Bacchus' lip! I like a full-voiced
fellow,
A craggy-throated, fat-cheeked trum-
peter,
A barker, a moon-howler. . . .

There is more triumph than failure of these startling effects in the last poems of "The Ivory Gate," and the range is much larger. Beddoes can satirize Britannia from a penny:

O flattering likeness on a copper coin!
Sit still upon your slave-raised cotton
ball,
With upright toasting fork and tooth-
less cat.

He concludes "Silenus in Proteus" with the wit of

I taught thee then, a little tumbling
one,
To suck the goatskin oftener than the
goat?

"An Unfinished Draft," beginning "The snow falls by thousands into the sea," shows his lyric powers, as does the striking image in "The Phantom-Wooer":

Sweet and sweet is their poisoned note,
The little snakes of silver throat, . . .

Similarly, the lyrics in the verse-dramas are now best remembered. The larger effect Beddoes was trying for by con-

structing plot, character, and situation never quite came off; the fault mainly lies in the plots of the dramas together with their settings and the distraught emotions of the speakers. The two brides of *The Brides' Tragedy* are Floribel and Olivia; the latter's brother, Orlando, has forced Floribel's wooer, Hesperus, to promise marriage to Olivia so that Orlando himself can wed Floribel. Hesperus decides both shall be the "brides" of Death. In Act III he stabs Floribel when she keeps his tryst; as Olivia is preparing for her wedding to Hesperus his deed is discovered and the Duke orders his arrest at the marriage feast. When he is condemned to die, Olivia dies, too, and Floribel's mother (having poisoned Hesperus with the scent of flowers at the place of execution) precedes Hesperus to the grave in a general holocaust that includes the fathers of Floribel and Hesperus. Most of the action takes place offstage, the characters making the most of the marvelous situations, such as a suicide's grave, for verbal arias which furiously imitate the clotted passages of witty exchange in the Elizabethan play. The play is moment by moment effective, but as a whole it is impossible. Much the same can be said for *Death's Jest-Book* or "The Fool's Tragedy." Wolfram goes to the Holy Land to rescue Duke Melveric from the Saracens. The two fight over the love of Sibylla and Melveric kills Wolfram, whose body is returned to Grussau accompanied by the Duke, in the disguise of a friar, and Sibylla. There the Duke finds his two sons, Adalmar and Athulf, plotting rebellion against the Duke's Governor, Thorwald, and fighting each other for the love of Thorwald's daughter, Amala. The rebellion is led by Isbrand, Wolfram's vengeful brother, who has substituted a clown, Mandrake, for Wolfram's corpse, so that when the Duke, despairing of his present troubles, asks his African slave to raise the dead, first Mandrake, then Wolfram come from the sepulchre. The wedding of Adalmar and Alama is planned. Isbrand agrees to marry Sibylla; Athulf ap-

pears to commit suicide by drinking poison as the musicians, come to lead Alama to her marriage, sing the beautiful song, "We have bathed, where none have seen us." The scene ends with Athulf killing Adalmar. In the fifth act the events are most complicated, for the ghost of Wolfram is seeking revenge and the conspirators have decided to kill Isbrand. Sibylla dies but Athulf does not. The conspiracy first succeeds and then is overthrown. In the end the Duke loses both his sons, resigns his crown to Thorwald, and makes a marvelous final exit, going into the sepulchre with Wolfram. The play is saturated in echoes of Shakespeare, both in the language ("O Arab, Arab! Thou dost sell true drugs") and situation of a Duke in disguise, and but for Beddoes' obvious gravity the situation would amount to a parody. Many of the situations and passages play on death, but apart from a soliloquy by Isbrand, the "Fool" of the subtitle, do little more than weave around the subject. The soliloquy in Act V, Scene 1, begins:

How I despise
All you mere men of muscle! It was ever

THE POETRY OF BETJEMAN

Author: John Betjeman (1906-)

Principal published works: *Mount Zion*, 1932; *Continual Dew*, 1937; *Old Lights for New Chancels*, 1940; *New Bats in Old Belfries*, 1945; *Selected Poems*, 1948; *A Few Late Chrysanthemums*, 1954; *Poems in the Porch*, 1954; *John Betjeman's Collected Poems*, 1958; *Summoned by Bells*, 1960; *High and Low*, 1967

No poet can write a partial shelf of verse without gaining a following and some degree of reputation. John Betjeman is no exception. For more than a quarter of a century his witty and ruefully wise poems in celebration of the English way of life have been the delight of the nostalgic and the knowing, among whom they served as a password in those strata of British society represented by Kensington and Hampstead drawing rooms, country houses, and donnish university commons. It cannot be claimed, then, that *John Betjeman's Collected Poems* ar-

My study to find out a way to godhead,
And on reflection soon I found that first
I was but half created; that a power
Was wanting in my soul to be its soul,
And this was mine to make.

This passage carries the ring of reality and makes us see Isbrand as a *persona* for Beddoes, one of the rare moments when he speaks recognizable truth. In the "Lines written in Switzerland," after a passage that plays with the notion of Truth, Beddoes again speaks out in what may well be his epitaph:

Not in the popular playhouse, or full
throng
Of opera-gazers longing for deceit; . . .
May verse like this e'er hope an eye
to feed on't.
But if there be, who, having laid the
loved
Where they may drop a tear in roses'
cups,
With half their hearts inhabit other
worlds; . . .
Such may perchance, with favorable
mind,
Follow my thought along its mountain-
ous path.

rived unheralded on the literary scene and scored an overnight success for their author. It may be assumed, however, that neither Mr. Betjeman nor his publishers were prepared for the impact of this volume on critics and public alike.

In England, where his *Collected Poems* appeared late in 1958, the response of readers and reviewers was immediate and enthusiastic. Honors followed: a Home Service reading on Boxing Night, serialization in the London *Daily Mail*, two important literary prizes, and a word of approval from Princess

Margaret. There had been nothing like this in poetry for generations, certainly not for a writer who deprecatingly styles himself "a poet and hack" and who once declared that he wrote chiefly for those who share his appreciation of the settings, attitudes, and moral feeling of the Edwardian past.

Such popularity and acclaim are in themselves an indication of excellence, but in the case of John Betjeman the relative values of his work have been made ambiguous by those who profess to admire him most. The chief difficulty in critical appraisal seems to be that he fits into none of the convenient categories by which modern poets are pigeonholed and judged. He is neither experimental nor obscure; he remains a traditionalist in forms and meters; maintaining a proper lightness of touch, he displays none of the solemnity with which his contemporaries fit serious language to serious themes. These aspects of his writing create confusion among his critics. He has been called a poet of the provinces, of the suburbs, of church architecture and history, of English class structure. By the same token he has been described as nostalgic, insular, flippant, devout, sensitive, fantastic, humorous, antiquarian, and sectarian. But within this confusion of category and epithet one point remains fixed: he is both the possessor of a brilliant comic sense and a profoundly serious poet.

This conjunction of the comic and the serious is important to an understanding of the whole body of his poetry. It explains, among other things, the tradition of light verse within which he works. W. H. Auden has stated the case for this type of poetry in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Light Verse*, which he edited in 1938. As he points out, in the more stable societies of the past most poetry tended to be "light" in that its sources were a common background of belief and custom shared by the poet and his readers, with the result that major

poets as well as minor ones could express themselves in a familiar style and employ the images of everyday, familiar life. Auden sees the real break between the poet and his audience coinciding with the Industrial Revolution, which disrupted community knowledge and feeling. The Romantics, finding the world too much with them, made poetry introspective and moody when they turned to private areas of imagination and sensibility.

During the nineteenth century light verse was directed toward more specialized ends—parody, *vers de société*, satire, nonsense rhymes, even fantasy—without losing its value as a reflection of contemporary reality. At the same time it preserved advantages lost to serious poetry. Today the writer of light verse is free to exercise his talent with traditional techniques, incongruous imagery, contexts of bravura and wit. Its practitioners demonstrate that this kind of poetry may be frivolous but need not be trivial. At its best its effects are those of realistic temper, humor, and satire.

John Betjeman often walks a narrow line between parody and his own brand of wild originality. Part of the fun in reading him comes from the spectacle of twentieth century vulgarity and materialism set jiggling to old tunes. For example, "A Subaltern's Love-song" to that strapping games-girl, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, is written in the meter of Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib." In much the same way the twilight mood of Tennyson's lyric beginning "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white," has been transmitted into a sunset scene at a middle-class beach resort. The Scottish braes of "Annie Laurie" become a tidy suburb in "May-Day Song for North Oxford." And Kipling's rhythms echo brassily in "Longfellow's Visit to Venice."

But such examples are not intended to present John Betjeman merely as a parodist of distinction. He is capable of structures and rhythms that are unmistakably

his own. The simple but effective musicality of a poem such as "Wantage Bells" reveals the true poet.

Nor does his skill in parody help to account for the complexities and ambiguities that lie at the center of his writing. It is easy enough to trace out the main strands of his poetry—local associations, a sense of class structure, Anglicanism—but difficult to explain them. Of these, landscape, along with the memories it evokes, is the most accessible. He is a poet of place as Crabbe was and Wordsworth was not; no pantheistic coloring clouds his pictures and the scene is presented in every recognizable detail. His sense of attachment extends also to old parish churches, inns now threatened by neon lighting and cocktail bars, Victorian railroad stations, and crenelated town halls. But from these poems it is clear that the place which moves him most is Cornwall with its boyhood memories. "Treberthick" reflects that period of his life.

Against his varied country, suburban, and city backgrounds the poet gives full play to his strong sense of social fact. It is plain that he reverences the class structure as a heritage of the English past, but at the same time he views its hierarchical distinctions with an amused and critical eye. This mixture of love and irony will be incomprehensible to most American readers. It is, however, an aspect of Betjeman's Englishness that must be taken for granted. His own sympathies are clearly on the side of the Establishment. But if he has found much to admire in its way of life—and "Death of King George V" is a moving expression

of his point of view—he has also found within the system objects for his satire and malice. Think of our nation's position and its meaning says the feminine worshiper in Westminster Abbey during the 1940 blitz.

"How to Get on in Society" was Betjeman's contribution to the U-non-U controversy before that heated debate began. Social pretense has seldom been more cruelly revealed than in this poem.

John Betjeman's reverence for tradition is revealed also in the Anglicanism which pervades his poetry. He is not a religious poet in the seventeenth century sense. Rather, he sees the Church of England as a symbol of the everlasting, captured in its beautiful glass and by time. This view seems to explain his interest in ecclesiastical history and architecture; they are the Presence made real in ritual and stone. Betjeman is a poet of dark and disturbing moods which seem to spring from the terrors of time's ravages and the prospect of death. These also are centered in childhood memory. For the man the Sacrament is the consoling fact for his own mortality.

Nostalgia, wry compassion, social satire, the mystery of faith—these are mirrored in John Betjeman's vision of the world. Insular in his themes and outlook, he is nevertheless challenging in his presentation of what Lionel Trilling has called "a culture's buzz and hum of implication." In his pictures of modern society he has restored to light verse its function as commentary on manners and morals. That is the reason for his interest and importance to both English and American readers.

THE POETRY OF BION

Author: Bion (fl. Second century B.C.)

First transcribed: Second century B.C.

In antiquity, Bion was considered the third great pastoral poet after Theocritus and Moschus. This order of ranking is

apparently both chronological and stylistic. Very little is known of the life of Bion. He was born in an obscure place

called Phlossa near Smyrna sometime in the second century B.C. His death provides the subject of a superb pastoral elegy traditionally attributed to Moschus, "Lament for Bion." Actually this lament occasioned by the death of Bion is not by Moschus but rather by the hand of a pupil of Bion from Magna Graecia. In the lament the poet calls Bion's work Dorian and invokes the Sicilian Muses as if Bion were from Sicily. This detail, however, may be entirely conventional, for in the same poem Bion is called a shepherd and we know this detail to be simply an assumption customary to such writing which in no way reflects historical reality. According to the lament, Bion drank poison and in the next several lines the poet suggests darkly that justice will be done. If we can take these lines literally, what was the fate of Bion—suicide, murder, political execution? There is no way of knowing.

Probably the most important extant work of Bion is the pastoral elegy, "Lament for Adonis." Adonis, the youth beloved by Venus the goddess of love, has been slain by a wild boar and this poem laments his death. The structure of the poem is extremely conventional, inviting comparison with other pastoral elegies such as Milton's *Lycidas*. The poem begins with two lines which state, "I cry for Adonis, the beautiful boy lies dead and the Divinities of Love cry out that darling Adonis dies." These lines provide a kind of loose refrain or wail of lament recurring periodically throughout the poem and dividing the work into sections. The subject matter of these sections is as follows: 1. Love wakes the sleeping Venus, tells her that Adonis is dead, and advises her to dress in mourning clothes and tell the world of her loss. 2. Adonis lies dying in the hills. The boar's tusk has pierced his thigh and his blood drips on his snow white flesh. The color departs from his lips and he will never kiss Venus again. 3. The wound in the heart of Venus is greater than that in the thigh of Adonis. She wanders distraught with

grief over the face of the world. 4. When Adonis died, all the beauty of Venus died as well. All nature mourns him, the hills, the valleys, the streams, the flowers; even echoes cry woe for the dead Adonis. 5. Who would not weep for Adonis? Venus bends over his corpse, tries to revive him, consigns his soul to Persephone, the goddess of the underworld, and reproaches him for risking his life in the hunt. 6. The blood from Adonis and the tears of Venus spring up as mingled wildflowers. 7. The body of Adonis is prepared for burial with flowers and unguents, perfumes, and ceremonies. The final two lines of the poem advise Venus to leave her grief for today, for as the year passes and the seasons fulfill their cycle her grief will be perpetually renewed. Like all elegies, this poem projects the emotion of the bereaved against the transformations of nature, and as the bereaved passes from desolation to consolation nature dies and becomes renewed. The ultimate consolation of the poem is that all particular grief is part of the cyclical processes of nature; if we must grieve, we ought to grieve for the general fate of all things subject to decay rather than the particular fate of one creature. It is, finally, not Adonis but all living things including you yourself for whom you mourn.

"Achilles Among the Maidens" is a fragment in which one shepherd asks another shepherd to tell him the story of Achilles in Scyros. The background of this story is that Achilles did not want to join the Greek expedition against Troy celebrated in Homer's *Iliad*. Achilles therefore disguised himself for a time as a woman and hid in a harem. This fragment reports a bit of supposed dialogue between the disguised Achilles and a harem girl in which they lament that they cannot sleep together. The poem is both comic and erotic.

The remaining poems and lines attributed to Bion exist only in quotations made by the critics Stobaeus or Orion. Some of these fragments are brilliant bits

of verse. For example, there is a sketch in which a boy out hunting finds Cupid perched in a tree. He tries repeatedly to catch the brilliant bird with no success. An old farmer advises him that it would be far better to flee from that harmful creature, for it will only land on those who run away. In another he complains of the lot of the poet. If his poems are good, he will be famous. But if they are not good, what is the point of his life, so

short and so toilsome. Most of these fragments are erotic songs touched by the melancholy thought that all beauty must die and all love end in separation. The function of poetry in Bion's view is summarized in three lines of his verse: "May cupid call the Muses and the Muses bring love; and may the Muses always give me the song I want, sweet as honey, medicinally melody."

THE POETRY OF BLOK

Author: Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921)

Principal published works: *Verses About the Beautiful Lady*, 1904; *Earth's Bubbles*, 1905; *The City*, 1906; *An Unexpected Joy*, 1907; *The Snow Mask*, 1907; *The Earth in Snow*, 1908; *Collected Poems*, 1911-1912 (3 vols.); *The Twelve*, 1918; *Behind the Border of the Past*, 1920; *The Grey Morning*, 1920; *Retaliation*, 1922; *Collected Works*, 1932-1936

From 1894 to 1910 Symbolism was the leading movement of Russian poetry. It began as an *avant-garde* movement expressing an estheticist conception of art for art's sake and interest in the exotic and strange. The technique of Symbolism was impressionistic, and its poetic products were compared to music. Russian Symbolism gained much from French models and from the Russian philosopher-poet Vladimir Solovyov. The movement also embodied a certain bohemianism and an escape into personal fantasy and mysticism. Although the term Symbolism has been applied to a whole group of poets, not all of those so designated made as systematic use of symbols as the two leaders of the movement. Both Audrey Bely and Blok are central to Russian Symbolism in that they did rely on symbols, musical verse, and soaring personal fantasy.

Aleksandr Blok is perhaps the greatest Russian poet of the early twentieth century. Born in St. Petersburg in 1880, he grew up in a sophisticated society of writers, painters, and scientists. In 1903 he married Liubov Mendelev and in the same year discovered the work of Vladimir Solovyov. Solovyov claimed he had experienced a mystic vision of Sophia,

the incarnation of Divine Wisdom. From this he developed a metaphysics of total unity wherein the universe, though separated from God, continually strives for unity. Sophia is the principle of unification and harmony of the fragmented universe. For Solovyov, Sophia was a real and divine person whom he thought of as the "Eternal Feminine."

Blok's first period, from 1898 to 1904, was permeated by the influence of Solovyov, as was that of Bely, but in Blok's verse Sophia appears in the various incarnations of the Beautiful Lady, also as the Mysterious Maiden or the Eternally Young One. Blok's first collection of poetry, *Verses About the Beautiful Lady*, was published in 1904. In these poems the Beautiful Lady is indeed Solovyov's Sophia; however, the mood of the poems is one of expectation rather than mystical revelation. The Beautiful Lady is more of a dream and lyrical hope than a reality. Blok's early poems were prayer-like in tone, but these prayers were often disturbed by reversals: spiritual blasphemy, descent, and rebellion.

After 1904 the harmony of Blok's understanding of Sophia dissolved rapidly. Gradually he gave up his mystical flights and turned to more earthly descriptions.

At the same time his serenity gave way to despair and terror. The Unknown Woman, a prostitute whose identity the poet cannot discern, replaces the Beautiful Lady as the chief symbolic figure in his work. In *Earth's Bubbles* and *The City*, loneliness, ugliness, taverns, gypsies, and prostitutes are the favorite subjects. In his poetic drama, *The Puppet Show*, written in the same period, Blok ridicules his earlier dreams and mystic visions.

The failure of the 1905 revolution plunged Blok into greater despair and gloom. In 1909, depressed by the deaths of his young child and his father, he traveled abroad. This change of scene hardly changed his mood. From France he wrote: "European life is as revolting as that in Russia; in general, the life of all men the world over is a monstrous, dirty puddle." Blok's despair and gloom can be seen also in his "Danses Macabres," in which the poet talks about a corpse in the world of living people. It is easier for the corpse to remain alone, he says, but there are times when he must mix with the living. Then the corpse fears they will hear the rattle of his bones.

Despite his melancholy, Blok gradually gained a new positive faith, a love for Russia. True to form, he often compared Russia to women. And as with his conception of the Beautiful Lady, his new faith, though powerful, was irrational. He recognized Russia as backward and, almost as a result of this realization, he professed a great, faithful love for her. Blok questioned the significance of Russia's fate and her unseen destiny. He felt that the aristocratic culture was doomed, but that she had other sources of strength. In the poem "The Field of Kulikovo," he described the victory of the Russians over the Tartars in 1380. However, the most characteristic expression of Blok's new faith is found in a brief poem to Russia. Here he dwells on the sins and stupidities of Russia and yet ends with an assertion of his love for her, saying that she is dearer to him than any other.

In "Retaliation," which Blok began in

1910 and worked on until a few months before his death in 1921, he realistically describes social conditions in Russia. He had intended the work to be a panorama of Russian history during the reign of Alexander III and the Revolution of 1905. But the poem was never finished. Blok welcomed the 1917 revolution, and in "The Scythians" expressed the Socialist revolutionary opinion that the revolution of 1917 was a confirmation of the national characteristics of the Russian people. Here the Russian people, the "Scythians," could either be the friends or conquerors of the West, depending on whether the Allies would intervene in the Russian Revolution.

In *The Twelve*, usually regarded as Blok's masterpiece, the Red Revolution is portrayed less as a social or human catastrophe than as a cosmic upheaval. As the critic, Renato Poggioli, observed, Blok did not symbolize the Revolution by a standard image such as fire, which destroys but also warms. Instead, Blok used ice which would suggest demonic, blind forces. It does not call to mind either divine or human associations. Trotsky was also struck by this fact when he wrote that Blok thought of the Revolution only as an element which, because of his temperament and vision, he saw as in terms of cold, not heat. Poggioli maintains that Blok equated history with prehistory and felt that essentially man was still in the ice age. If we accept this interpretation it is possible to go still further and see in the poem the suggestion of Russia as a "Siberia of the Spirit."

Structurally the poem is composed of fragments varying in rhythm and style. Political slogans are juxtaposed with poetic images. The beginning of the poem is almost exclusively descriptive, suggesting the action only by a series of abbreviated sketches, but the central part becomes almost entirely narrative. Both the content and style suggest confusion and desperate brutality, but the effect of the whole is perfectly controlled by the poet. The imagery of cold and snow is pow-

erful, and the figure of Christ appearing at the end of the poem as the leader of the Red soldiers is startling. The meaning of Blok's use of Christ as a symbol is disputed, for it is a highly personal image, too ambiguous for the unengaged reader. Perhaps Christ symbolizes the victory of the Revolution over the Russian Empire. Or perhaps he redeems or consecrates the brutality of the Red soldiers. The twelve Red guards, of course, recall Christ's disciples. The specific meaning of the poem also caused a great controversy at the time of its publication in 1918, provoking endless discussion, praise, and condemnation.

Blok became increasingly disillusioned with the Revolution. It failed to satisfy his dreams, and the last entries in his

diary speak of his "love-hatred of Russia." In May, 1921, he wrote that corrupt Mother Russia had devoured him as an old sow eats her young. In August of that same year Blok died.

In spite of his renown, Blok did not greatly influence Russian literature, primarily because of the highly personal spirit of his poetry and the fact that anti-Symbolist trends after 1910 weakened any influence he might otherwise have had. Blok has been honored in the Soviet Union as a great poet who accepted the Revolution, but little comment has been made concerning the moods of gloom and despair in his poetry. The fact that he accepted the Revolution because of his personal mystical interpretation of its significance has been ignored.

THE POETRY OF BLUNDEN

Author: Edmund Charles Blunden (1896-)

Principal published works: *Pastorals: A Book of Verse*, 1916; *The Shepherd and Other Poems of Peace and War*, 1922; *English Poems*, 1925; *Retreat*, 1928; *Near and Far*, 1929; *Poems of Edmund Blunden*, 1914-1930, 1930; *Halfway House*, 1930; *Halfway House*, 1932; *Choice and Chance*, 1934; *Poems*, 1930-1940, 1940; *New Poems*, 1945; *Poems of Many Years*, 1957

Edmund Blunden is a poet and scholar not widely known despite the considerable body of work to his credit both in verse and prose. His concern with describing English countryside and country life, his contemplative and nostalgic mood, the restraint and even temper of the verse have run a quiet course beneath the experiments, the probing of self and society, the symbolic achievement, of the major modern poets. Even Blunden's war poems keep a restraint, a tone of both matter of factness and of pity which seldom approaches the work of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, or of Randall Jarrell, in violent imagery, anguished and angry outcry, bitter irony and social protest. His images are brutal enough, and shocking, but are presented more as a matter of sad fact, inevitability, than to shock the reader into a realization of the horror of combat. It is man's pitiable attempts at

heroism compared to the brute forces of destruction, which is Blunden's theme, rather than the causes of the war, and the questionable ends it serves. In later years, Blunden looks back at his war experience, and, as many others have done, he feels a mixture of awe and sadness that such momentous events could be past, covered, swept away and all but forgotten.

Some of his poems contribute a major clue to Blunden's attitude toward war. While, of course, detesting the whole bloody business, particularly the waste of static trench warfare wherein, as he explains in his classic prose work, *Under-tones of War*, suicide raids were carried out only to straighten a line on a map, Blunden's deepest feelings are reserved for the men he came to know and love under the enforced, close fellowship of combat. Under such inhuman conditions, the human virtues of kindness and

brotherliness become absolute values.

In the war poems, and in *Undertones of War*, Blunden describes the everyday feelings and even the small, delicious diversions of men caught in the military mill. He never attempts to raise his voice above the crash of battle. *Undertones* is remarkable for its quietly earnest and honest depiction of the whole range of military life.

Blunden's verse is essentially a formal, even stately, poetry, and the inversions of word order as well as the diction are often reminiscent of Milton and even more so of the eighteenth century nature poets, Thomson and Collins.

For all the traditional flavor of his verse, both in form and content, there is another side, or depth, to Blunden. Born perhaps in the war, and certainly brought to the full there, is his sense of impending, inevitable destruction. It is this foreboding, underlying the domestic exterior of everyday life, that gives Blunden's poems their bite. This deeper note is usually caught in a style which has an abruptness and natural strength which, while controlled by traditional formalism, gives him a disarmingly distinctive voice. This quality is well illustrated in a poem such as "The Survival"; others, such as "The Midnight Skaters" or "The Pike," for example, might serve as well. Whether set in a war zone or in rural Sussex, Blunden's sense of inevitable chaos lurking beneath the surface, or impending, is expressed. So is his respect for those who live on despite this fact, whether they are like those midnight skaters who "dance on this ball-room thin and wan," whirling carelessly over the dark waters of death just beneath, or those soldiers who, appalled and sick to death, still manage to treat their fellows with kindness and love.

There is an echo of Hardy in Blunden's poetry, not of the Hardy who dwells on the callousness of nature, on men as blind victims of chance or outright malevolence, but of the Hardy who portrays the rough common life of earth

and applauds those who can endure it.

Blunden's ability to depict domestic experience vividly goes beyond that of the Georgian Poets. Younger than most of them, he is in his poetry more individualistic, less given to their artifices and even affectations. "The Mole-Catcher" describes a trapper at work, who brutally kills moles but who is kind to all other animals, who is a good fellow and the bell-ringer of the local church. Blunden is neither satiric nor bitterly ironic here; he simply underscores how cruelty quite naturally is part of regular and peaceful lives.

Reminding one a bit of Gibson or Munro, Blunden is less whimsical and ironic, more starkly (though he would detest the use of the word) matter-of-fact.

It should be clear that Blunden's poems about English country life are not merely pastoral, escapist pieces. Everywhere is the note of life seen as momentary and as downright as it is in the trenches, though country life, as is evident in *Undertones of War*, provides moments of beauty and tranquillity which are to be grasped and cherished. One of Blunden's most remarkable poems, both for its vigorous, earthy style and its expression of the gap which separates normal country peace and war or other catastrophe, is "A Country God." The old English countryside, loved for its natural self and readily imagined as peopled with Pan and other mythic folk, is now a wasteland; the English pastoral has become a grim, muscular poem of modern destruction. The love of the old, of the prewar past, is a theme which occurs with increasing frequency in Blunden's poetry, and his later verse becomes mellow, solemn, retrospective. Even the war itself becomes a source of nostalgia.

Blunden's literary activities are not restricted to poetry. He collected and edited the tangled thickets of John Clare's verse, and he has published studies of Collins, Hardy, Lamb, Shelley, and Vaughan, among others. His survey

of English nature poetry, *Nature in English Literature* is limited in scope but reveals Blunden's admiration for the eighteenth and nineteenth century tradition of nature poetry and worship. His own writing is deeply rooted in a profound love of the English countryside and of the peculiar quality of the poetry which that love has produced from Thomson to Arnold. It is very British. The peculiarity of this verse and attitude is explained by Blunden as being due to nature loved both for its variegated actuality and for its capability of sustaining personification. According to Blunden, the ability to see both the natural fact and also a per-

sonification of a classical deity is the strength of English nature poetry.

To charge that this view is attenuated Romanticism is not quite just; it is a Romanticism severely tempered by war and a new society. Nonetheless, the common and lasting beauties of nature—of tree, bird, meadow—give evidence to the sensitive observer of an essential order and wholesomeness nothing can quite eradicate. Some such conviction, or feeling, would appear to be Blunden's rooted faith, which he has articulated in verse and prose, and in a voice at once muted and distinctive.

THE POETRY OF BOOTH

Author: Philip Booth (1925-)

Principal published works: *Letter from a Distant Land*, 1957; *The Islanders*, 1961; *Weather and Edges*, 1966

Philip Booth is a poet of the world about him. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he does not look at himself, contemplate himself, and then deliver obscure masses of words that have such private meaning as to be largely unintelligible. The reader can know what Booth is writing about and what he means. The poetry is complex only because the world the poet is writing about is complex. Certainly Booth is a poet who wants his poetry to be understood, not simply felt.

As a poet Booth utilizes many aspects of the world about him, the Christian tradition, myth and legend, other persons and their lives, and his own experience. Examples of his use of the scene about him are many in his published volumes. The title poem of *Letter from a Distant Land* is a Thoreauvian account of his life directed to Henry Thoreau, his "distant kinsman." Booth reports on himself by looking about him, halfway between an airfield and Walden Pond, as he puts it. Like Thoreau a century before, Booth sees the variety of life in detail: little girls climbing an apple tree, a hen pheas-

ant, a grosbeak in the pine, and airplanes in the sky, jet-powered night-fighters which wing over his home in the dark. Writing about Thoreau's former hut at Walden Pond, now a public park, he invokes Emerson's law of compensation for Sunday lovers and comments on beer cans that now float where Thoreau drank from the water of the pond. Other particular instances of his description of scenes familiar to him appear in "Green Song," "Crossing," and "Shag," all in *Letter from a Distant Land*, and "Jake's Wharf," "Convoy," and "Maine," in *The Islanders*.

The poet's use of Christian traditions and literature is found in such poems as "Admission of Guilt," "Adam," and "Original Sequence," all in his first-published volume. The last-named poem makes the concept of time one of the consequences of Adam's transgression. When Eve threw at God's feet the brown core of the apple she and Adam have eaten, God set time in motion. Booth's deity is something of a New England farmer, walking on a cool day in His orchard and musing in contempla-

tive pride on ownership, His handiwork, and His apples—Kings, Winesaps, McIntoshes, and Northern Spies.

Booth is often at his best when looking at the experience of others and writing about it, whether writing of persons or animals. An excellent example is "The Lost Boy," a poem about an eight-year-old who slips off to a marsh with his father's fishing rod upon a summer afternoon, leaving his parents and a hastily organized search party to hunt for him at dusk. The boy experiences turtles, frogs, bugs, and hunger, as well as rescue by a red helicopter and his father's sternness. All this becomes a dream for the child and, the following day, a source of schoolboy boasting in the play yard. In "Builder," in *The Islanders*, the reader meets Mace Eaton, who talks and works from November to May, building a boat. The talk is of the sea and Mace's boat, the *Annie Gott*, and the work proceeds from a model half-hull through keel, transom, stem, and ribs, to the placing of a last coat of glossy paint upon the hull that will sail steady and true even in a storm. In "Maine" Booth describes how thrifty people in that state employ old auto engines to saw cordwood, drive tractors, propel boats, and even serve as mooring anchors for their boats. But he is writing really about the men, not the old engines they use. In "Big Dog" the poet writes of a sheepdog which leaped out of a barn to the ground eighteen feet below and survived, though bloody at the nose. He writes, in "Ox-Pull: Canaan Fair," of the animals put in contest with other teams at the fair to show their strength.

At other times the poet writes of himself, from his own experience, as in "Ego," a poem which reflects the poet and his feelings when he was in the Army Air Force during World War II. Though he was in a ground-crew, signaling the planes to stop on the flight line, he used to revel in the excitement of flying in his imagination. From a later time, when he lived and worked near the land, he writes of his own experiencing of

spring, in "Green Song." Here he tells how he feels the movement of the earth, the plants, the birds, and his relationship in movement to them. A different experience is recorded in "First Lesson." Here the poet speaks to an infant daughter, giving her a first lesson in living. As he describes it, he looks at the infant, her small head cradled in his hand, and thinks of the life ahead of her; though the child rests now in his arms, she, like everyone, will soon swim through the sea on a journey to her island.

Literal meaning is always present in Booth's poetry, and it is usually striking in its presentation. His islands are real islands; his wharves are real wharves; his propellers real propellers. When he writes about Matinicus Island he is as careful as a chartmaker to give its location: 68°55'W—43°52'N. When he writes about Sable Island he does the same. In "Sable Island" the first stanza is as specific as the title in its description of the sand and the loneliness and the "bones" of wrecked ships. But underneath the literal there is always more, as in all good poetry. The implications are there for the alert and discerning reader, along with the hard facts and the specific imagery.

If there is any difficulty for the reader it is difficulty traceable to language rather than to symbolism. The language, especially in *The Islanders*, and the metaphors may be unfamiliar to the reader. In order to experience the poems one must know the language the poet uses and the things he speaks of; the reader must share language and experience with the poet. In "Crossing" there is probably no difficulty, for most people have seen what the poet describes, a freight train of a hundred cars from all over the country, and such terminology as B&O, Pennsy, U.P., Rock Island, and Frisco is common knowledge. But the experience of the poet behind other poems is not so apt to be shared. In "Chart 1203" the very title is a reference to a navigation chart of Penobscot Bay and may be elusive for a

reader. Even the diction of "The Round," a poem listing at least fifty different plants may prove to have little meaning for the reader who knows nothing of common weeds and their names. Yet to use this language and these references is not unfair of the poet. What Booth wants to say in his poetry is thus best said.

Booth has tried not to be obscure, not to be guilty of trying to reach a limited audience only. Readers who sail coastal waterways and know boating will have an advantage, as will those who have lived close to the land and who have read Emerson and Thoreau. But the reader who has not done these can also understand, if but partially, and this understanding is what the poet wants.

Although Booth's poems have generally appeared first in periodicals, the

poems are best read in his three volumes. The poems in each book reinforce one another, give one another a context that heightens experience for the reader and clarifies the patterns of meaning.

As a poet, Booth regards himself and the world as closely related. The poet, for him, is obviously part of the whole, interacting with the other parts, not simply existing outside it or as an observer. Booth does not sentimentalize about existence. His world is not merely one of blue sea and clear skies; it is also a world of rocks, shoals, and fog, where one must listen closely for the signal of the foghorn and be on the watch for shoal water, rocks, and silently floating logs. He sees that the voyage is dangerous as well as pleasant, but all the more challenging for the danger involved.

THE POETRY OF BROOKE

Author: Rupert Brooke (1887-1915)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1911; 1914 and *Other Poems*, 1915; *Collected Poems*, 1915

In World War I, when news of Rupert Brooke's death reached England, John Drinkwater wrote that there had not been a sadder loss to poetry since Shelley's death, a judgment that seemed borne out by the sale of 58,000 copies of the *Collected Poems* by 1921. There was also the legend, rapidly crystallized, of the "great lover," the handsomest Englishman of his day, famed for his charm. So much had he become the symbol of the youth of England, now decimated by the war, that the strange proposal was made to fix the church clock at Grantchester permanently at "ten to three" as a memorial to his best-loved poem. Yet of this reputation, once so splendid, little remains today, and there are few readers of his poems. The reason is to be found in the radical change that has overtaken English poetry since World War I and sent it along roads far different from those that Rupert Brooke knew.

For the literary historian, 1915 was an interestingly crucial year in English poetry: it saw the publication in England of Brooke's *Collected Poems* and in America of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which appeared in the Chicago magazine, *Poetry*. So utterly unlike are Brooke's war sonnets and Eliot's ironic dramatic monologue that it is as difficult to reconcile their publication in the same year as to remember that Brooke was only a year older than Eliot and that, had it not been for the war, could easily have lived into the 1960's. Brooke marked the end, as Eliot did the beginning, of a literary age.

The short-lived group known as "the Georgians" was not a poetic school as the term is understood in France; it was a loosely knit group whose members had in common only a reaction against the false medievalism of the late nineteenth century and the artificiality of the 1890's. It

was a return to actuality in subject matter and an employment of the tone and accent of natural speech. The preciosity of the generation of Wilde and Dowson had to be removed from English poetry; the vigor of the common language of men had to be restored, as Wordsworth had found necessary a century earlier. More than anything, there was need for fresh air after the incense-laden atmosphere of the Aesthetic Movement. There was a re-discovery of the beauty of the English countryside and of the sheer joy of living, after the elaborately cultivated world weariness and disillusionment of the 1890's. The influence of France, which had been dominant in England, was cast off; there was a return to the main stream of English poetry. The Georgians were perhaps the last romantics, as they were also the last to be what we usually think of as typically English.

Brooke went through an early apprenticeship period during which he was much influenced by the "decadents," particularly Dowson, an experience natural enough for a man of his generation, before he found his own voice and his own style. The late George Woodberry, in his celebrated essay that serves as an introduction to the *Collected Poems*, suggested that Brooke excelled in three aspects of poetry: the dramatic sonnet, the narrative idyl, and the "mélange." By the dramatic sonnet, Woodberry meant a sonnet in which "there is a tragic reversal or its equivalent"; that is, the last line of the poem suddenly reverses the mood that has been carefully built up for thirteen lines. The idyl derives from Milton's early poems, even to the use of seven and eight-syllable rhyming couplets and glimpses of the English countryside with its flowers and trees and streams. By the "mélange" Woodberry meant such poems as "The Great Lover," in which the poet, having garnered experience, re-creates it in language without particular regard for the value of the experience. The poem is a compilation of physical objects and sensations, held together only by a slender

thread of association.

There was also at work on Brooke another influence: that of the Metaphysical poets; and it may be well to remind the present generation that it was not T. S. Eliot alone who rediscovered these figures from the early seventeenth century. Brooke was much interested in them while an undergraduate at Cambridge, for he was an omnivorous reader. His most recent biographer, Christopher Hassall, has aptly pointed out that the greater influence on Brooke's poetry came from Marvel rather than from Donne, for it was in Marvel's poetry that gravity becomes transformed into humor and levity into seriousness. This is the tone of many of Brooke's later poems and particularly of his famous, "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester." Hassall maintains quite rightly that Brooke would have been wiser had he allowed the original title of "The Sentimental Exile" to remain, as it expressed more precisely the intended mood of the poem and would have cleared it of the charge of excessive sentimentality that has been brought against it. Clearly, the gravity is making fun of itself in the contrast between the stiff, regulated world of prewar Germany, symbolized by tulips, and the "unofficial" blooming roses of the Vicarage near Cambridge where Brooke had lived.

The two great experiences in Brooke's short life were his visit to the South Seas and the World War of 1914. The first of these came in 1913 after a complicated and unhappy love affair which has been called by his biographer "a deep sleep." The islands of the Pacific, then relatively unspoiled, provided a background, incredibly lush and exuberant, against which the poet's imagination could operate. That Brooke had always been a nature poet is obvious enough; in Tahiti, nature was so prodigal of its beauty that the pinks and carnations and lilacs of the Old Vicarage seemed tame and colorless. It was in this tropical atmosphere that Brooke wrote what is usually considered to be his finest prewar poem, "Tiare Ta-

hiti," in which the sensuous world of the South Seas is combined with Platonic "ideas" treated half-playfully, half-seriously, a marriage of tropical images and metaphysical wit.

It is easy to understand the popularity of Brooke's early poems among young readers of both his own and subsequent generations. They are frankly the work of a young man, deeply in love with life and candidly expressing the joys and the sorrows of his first encounter with the world, its beauty, and its grief. The poems are written in a language that is easy, natural, even colloquial, very beautiful as that term used to be understood. They lost their appeal when the whole attitude of youth changed as one of the results of the shattering explosion of World War I. To the more recent generations of young people, in whose toughened, cynical minds there seems to be little room for youth, these poems have nothing to say.

To read the biography of any Englishman of Brooke's generation is a haunting experience, for behind all the gaiety and brilliance of Georgian society loomed the dark shadow that was to engulf so many of these doomed young men. Brooke's brief part in the war is too well known to need repetition. Because of his charm, his good looks, his poetic promise, he soon became a symbol for the youth of England that was being slaughtered in the trenches.

It is a strange irony that the very qualities of Brooke's poetry that was written during the war are the very ones that have achieved the destruction of his once great reputation. Other war poets, particularly Wilfred Owen, have survived; Brooke has been rejected. The difference is that Brooke's death came early in the conflict, only eight months after its outbreak, when hopes were still high and when the horror of the trenches of Flanders had not yet turned poetry away from a celebration of heroism to a furious hatred of everything connected with the war. Later, the cynical disillusionment of

the post-Armistice years completed the cycle. A public that remembered the appalling slaughter in France and that had read such books as *All Quiet on the Western Front* was very different from the reading public of 1915.

And yet—again ironically—Brooke did not glorify war. He accepted and rejoiced in the necessity of dying for his country; he paid tribute to those who had fallen. Further, his war poetry is small in bulk, consisting only of "1914," a sequence of five sonnets. These were written at Christmas of that year, when the war was but a few months old. For these poems he has been saddled with the reputation of being a "war poet" in the worst sense of the term. A contemporary critic, for example, has called these sonnets "decadent and puerile," a statement that is both unfair and inaccurate, for it assumes Brooke's ability to foresee the situation of 1918. What he might have felt, what he might have written, had he survived a few more years or had he seen the eventual battlefields of France, we, of course, cannot know; he might, had he lived, have written poems as bitter as those of Siegfried Sassoon or Wilfred Owen. But because of his early death, he did become a symbol; and when the post-war reaction set in, he suffered accordingly. The symbol had lost its value.

Brooke's last years, as was said earlier, were crucial for English poetry. At the very moment when the Georgians were planning their annual anthology, there stood among them the tall figure of T. E. Hulme, who was preparing the dynamite that was to blow their whole poetic practice to bits. Hulme was one of those enigmatic, behind-the-scenes figures who occasionally turn up and are later recognized as having had far more influence than was apparent at the time. He, also, was killed in the war; his own poems, five in number, are undistinguished examples of the Imagist school. But just as Eliot supplied the model that later poetry was to copy all too faithfully, Hulme supplied the intellectual program. It was he who

so violently attacked anything that savored of the "romantic" and who prophesied "a period of dry, hard, classical verse." Hulme and Eliot apparently never met, yet here were two forces working in the same direction. Clearly, the kind of poetry written by the Georgians was doomed; it could not survive the change in the intellectual climate that occurred after the war. Brooke, in spite of the youthful cynicism of some of his early poems, was a romantic in both senses of the word. At times he had premonitions of the type of poetry that is so fashionable today: the use of the deliberately "nonpoetic" in subject and detail. So much has taste changed that it is now hard to realize that his sonnet "A Channel Passage" distressed his friends to the point that he was urged not to publish it.

Yet its description of sea sickness is mild enough by modern standards.

By no stretch of the term can Brooke be called a great poet. What he might have become, had he not belonged to that tragic generation of Englishmen, we cannot know. His charm—and he undeniably has poetic charm—lies in a youthful exuberance, a boyishness, a love of life, an ability to laugh at himself. And his poetry has this advantage, noted in Hassall's recent biography: the Georgians were the last poets to attempt to bridge the gap between poet and reader, to attempt to draw the reader to them. The "dry, hard, classical verse" predicted by Hulme, with its tortured syntax, private references, deliberate obscurity, may present a greater intellectual challenge but it has lost its readers.

THE POETRY OF CAMPION

Author: Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

Principal published works: *Poemata*, 1595; *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, 1602; *A Booke of Ayres*, 1601; *Two Bookes of Ayres*, 1612; *The Third and Fourth Booke of Ayres*, 1617; *A New Way of Making Four Parts in Counterpoint*, 1618

Of the lyric poets of the English Renaissance, Thomas Campion is for some modern readers one of most difficult to appreciate and value. This is not to say he is a "difficult" poet in the way John Donne, his more famous contemporary, is difficult. Campion is not a poet, as is Donne, with whom one must struggle because of the density of his language, meaning, and imagery. Campion's language is transparent, his meaning is seldom in doubt, and his imagery is both simple and conventional. In short, he seems to many, who look for the wrong thing, to be too easy. Campion comes close to being a pure lyricist whose excellence is not to be described by an appeal to intellectual complexity or to originality, in the romantic sense of the term, but by an appeal to art, artifice, technique, and the elegant handling of tradition.

Though he wrote some fine religious lyrics, and an occasional moral apostro-

phe, Campion's true subject is love—not the immediate and frankly sexual love of Donne's early poetry, but rather the politely erotic game of literary and aristocratic love. The poetry never pretends to be anything but an elegant and highly artificial kind of play, and the poems are full of the conventions, both of theme and style, of the highly formal love poetry of the Renaissance. Amarillis, Laura, shepherds and shepherdesses, rosy cheeks, tears and sighs, Cupids, nymphs, gods and goddesses, cruel maids and faithless swains abound in Campion. The stylized voices in the poems never utter so immediate and passionate a statement as that which opens Donne's "Canonization": "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love." Campion's speakers utter words that evoke not an immediate situation, but a set of general, literary conventions: "O Love, where are thy shafts, thy quiver, and thy bow?"

The special skills and concerns of a poet like Campion, who wrote within a set of traditional conventions—many of which are now unfamiliar—must be well understood before his verse can yield its special excellence. First, we must recognize that Campion was a highly educated man who wrote for a highly sophisticated and educated society. He was trained in both law and medicine, and his schooling and his literary tastes both in reading and writing were strongly classical. His first publication was a group of greatly admired Latin poems, the *Poemata*. In many of his English poems we find verbal echoes of the great Roman poets, Horace, Martial, and, particularly, Catullus the Roman lyricist of love *par excellence*. Not only can we find specific references to the ancient poets in the poetry, but the atmosphere of many of the poems is powerfully classical, even though the poem has no definite Latin ancestor, and even though, as is usually the case, the setting and world in the poem is English and Renaissance modern (for example, “Jacke and Jone they thinke no ill,” or “There is a garden in her face”). That is, the classical influence is not merely a matter of allusion to ancient poets and mythology. Such allusions are frequent enough—for example, his imitation of Catullus’ most famous poem in “My sweetest Lesbia let us live and love”—but not overwhelmingly present. More important is the stylistic influence. The sharply turned epigrammatic statements, the tightly controlled form and language, the avoidance of metaphor and other spectacular figures of speech, the bitter-sweet and ironic tone that characterize Campion’s verse, these and other such things are largely the product of the poet’s imitation in English of classical Latin poetry. The significance of all this is enhanced when we remember that the people for whom Campion wrote were also widely read in or at least familiar with ancient poetry. Thus, a reference or turn of speech which might send us to a classical dictionary, or which we might miss alto-

gether, would seem natural, elegant, and effective to Campion’s original audience.

Related to these matters is Campion’s advocacy of writing English poetry in classical meters. The poet, in a very controversial pamphlet, *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, argued that for English poetry to achieve the highest excellence, poets should avoid rhyme, as did the ancients, and should count poetic feet in terms of the quantitative lengths of vowel sounds rather than in the more natural to English (as opposed to Latin and Greek) method of counting strong and weak accentual stresses. Campion and others who espoused this argument had little effect, and their crusade is now thought of as a literary curiosity. As a matter of fact, Campion himself managed to write only one truly successful rhymeless poem in classical meters (“Rosecheekt Lawra, come”); all of his most admired pieces are in standard English accentual meters, and are in rhyme. Yet it is significant that Campion was involved in this controversy. It shows us how important classical practice was to him, how intense was his involvement in the literary arguments of his time, and how particular was his concern with the most technical aspects of his art.

Important as the classical aspect of Campion’s art is, however, it must be made clear that much of the traditional material in the poems is drawn from the late medieval courtly love tradition as it was filtered into Renaissance English letters through the poetry of the Italian Petrarchan tradition and the sixteenth century French tradition (itself heavily influenced by the Italian accomplishment) exemplified in the poetry of Ronsard and his followers. Nor must one minimize the native English tradition of amatory verse from Chaucer through Wyatt and Spenser; while recognizing, of course, that it too was heavily influenced by the Italian tradition at every stage. In this literary complex readers were made familiar with the sighing lover, the abandoned maid, and many other such conven-

tions. It is enough to recognize that Campion wrote within the multi-faceted, cosmopolitan tradition of the Renaissance love lyric, and that the classics, while not the whole of Campion's interest, were the most conscious non-English focus of his attention and taste.

Just as the reader must be aware of the various literary factors that helped shape Campion's work, he must also be aware of the influence music had on the poetry. Campion, besides being a poet, was a talented composer who wrote almost all of his verse to be set to his own music. In fact, the poet did not often think of his music and his poetry separately. He composed each with an eye to the other, and his overall artistic goal, as he said, was to join his "words and notes lovingly together." In his work, then, song gives meaning to the poem, and poem gives meaning to the song.

Campion's success as a poet-composer had much to do with the fact that he lived in the greatest age of English music, the age of such composers (many of whom he knew) as Byrd, Wilbye, Morlay, Dowland, Weelkes, and Gibbons. The great achievements of all of these men was in the area of vocal music, and their age thought music and poetry to be much more interdependent than does ours. The most well-known form of English Renaissance music was the madrigal, a complex kind of song for two to seven voices, though sometimes instruments would be substituted for some of the voices. Each voice sang a different melodic line, and thus the simple lyric of the madrigal tended to be dominated by the complexity of the performance. Campion, therefore, did not concentrate on writing madrigals, but on the "ayre," a relatively simple, clear melodic line composed to be sung by one or two voices to the accompaniment of the lute. As was not true in the madrigal, in the ayre the melody and the poetry were of equal value since neither dominated the other.

The modern reader of Campion's poetry should always remember that when

he reads the poems alone he has available to him less than half the artistic effect Campion originally created. Both the music and, crucially, the artistry of the performer are left out. The reader should also remember that any judgment, no matter how sensitive, of the poems separate from the available music is bound to be less than adequate. An analogy might be made to the contemporary popular song: think how flat would be the experience of reading an anthology of modern song poems as compared to the effect of hearing the poems and the music in performance. This analogy breaks down, of course, when we recognize that while our contemporary song poems seldom claim to be distinguished poetry, Campion's lyrics (and the lyrics of many of his contemporaries, including Shakespeare) do claim to be fine poems as well as good words to accompany good music.

As for Campion's idea of how music should be composed and how the nature of poetry was analogous to the nature of music, we have this statement from the preface to his first *Booke of Ayres*. "What Epigrams are in Poetrie, the same are Ayres in musicke, then in their chiefe perfection when they are short and well seasoned."

All in all, even though his technical mastery and art seldom fail, Campion is better read in selection than in his entirety. His poetic world of love is narrow and, when viewed in over long sittings, monotonous. With Campion it is as with flowers of the field, a substantial handful makes a beautiful bouquet, an armful makes a cloying mass. Too much delicacy deadens the senses. Among those poems of Campion most often admired, then, are "When to her lute Corinna sings," "There is a Garden in her face," "Follow your Saint, follow with accents sweet," "I care not for these Ladies," "Shall I come, sweet Love, to thee?" "Never love unless you can Beare with all the faults of a man," "Rose-cheekt Lawra, come," "When thou must home to shades of underground," and "Harke, all you ladies

that do sleep." Many other poems might be named here, but in these we can find

a fair and wide sample of the poet's excellence.

THE POETRY OF CAREW

Author: Thomas Carew (c. 1594-1640)

Principal published works: *Coelum Britannicum*, 1634; *Poems*, 1640

Thomas Carew unites, with more success than any of his contemporary poets at the court of Charles I, the classical clarity of Ben Jonson with the intellectual wit of John Donne; at his best he produced work worthy of both of his masters, and almost all of his poems are polished and entertaining. Like the other best-known Cavalier poets, Sir John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, Thomas Randolph, and William Davenant, he devoted much of his attention to the song and the love lyric, complimenting real or imaginary ladies. There are few lovelier poems of this type than Carew's "Ask Me No More":

Aske me no more where Jove bestowes,
When June is past, the fading rose:
For in your beauties orient deepe,
These flowers as in their causes, sleepe.

Aske me no more whether doth stray,
The golden Atomes of the day:
For in pure love heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your haire.

Aske me no more if East or West,
The Phenix builds her spicy nest:
For unto you at last shee flies,
And in your fragrant bosome dyes.

The images of the fading rose, the golden atoms, and the phoenix are the traditional ones of Renaissance love poetry, made fresh by the purity of Carew's diction, and they combine to form a tribute which, in effect, transcends the compliment of a single lover to a particular lady and becomes a tribute to all beauty.

Like Ben Jonson, Carew builds much of his love poetry upon the imagery and the themes of the Greek and Roman lyric poets. Classical deities, especially Cupid, find their way into many of his poems,

and countless of his verses are variations upon the familiar "Carpe Diem" theme of Horace, the notion expressed so well by Robert Herrick in his "Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May." Typical of Carew's treatment of the transience of beauty are these lines from one of his longer works, "To A. L., Persuasions to Love":

For that lovely face will faile
Beautie's sweet, but beautie's fraile
'Tis sooner past, 'tis sooner done
Then Summers raine, or winters Sun:
Most fleeting when it is most deare,
'Tis gone while wee but say 'tis here.

While the language and imagery of Carew's love poems, his skill at handling a variety of stanza forms, and the melodious quality of his verses, which were often sung, reveal his place as one of the "Sons of Ben," he adopts in many of his lyrics the cynical tone and, occasionally, the bizarre imagery of Donne's early works. He borrows the Metaphysical practice of speaking of love in terms of religion, commerce, or geography, and he uses the device skillfully; however, his language almost always seems derivative, while that of Donne impresses the reader as revelation of new and vital relationships. The song, "To my inconstant Mistress," shows Carew's use of a theological vocabulary to speak of his lady:

When thou, poore excommunicate
From all the joyes of love, shalt see
The full reward, and glorious fate,
Which my strong faith shall purchase
me,
Then curse thine owne inconstancie.

Carew's court poetry is witty, elegant, and amusing, but it very rarely, even at

its most sensual, conveys anything of the emotional or intellectual power of Donne's work. It is in this sense typical of the writing of the Caroline poets, who were, like their French contemporaries, the *precieux*, generally concerned with form rather than with the expression of either ideas or feelings. (The presence of Charles I's queen, Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII, at the English court insured some influence of contemporary French culture on English writers.) Even the highly erotic "A Rapture," a glorification of physical love, is so metaphorical in its language that there is little sense of real passion involved.

Carew was, on occasion, capable of breaking out of the conventional bonds of his generation, and he reveals an unexpected strength in his brilliant elegy on Donne, in which he follows his predecessor's techniques closely in paying tribute to him. At the very beginning of the poem Carew imitates Donne's abrupt, terse style and his strikingly original imagery. He asks why the age has offered no epitaph for one of its great men:

Can we not force from widdowed
Poetry,
Now thou art dead (Great Donne)
one Elegie
To crowne thy Hearse? Why yet dare
we not trust
Though with unkneaded dowe-bak't
prose thy dust,
Such as the unscisor'd Churchman from
the flower
Of fading Rhétorique, short liv'd as his
houre,
Dry as the sand that measures it, should
lay
Upon thy Ashes, on the funerall day?

Carew captures much of the spirit of Donne's achievement in his reference to "the flame/Of they brave Soule, that shot such heat and light,/As burnt our earth, and made our darknesse bright." The disparate images that follow, related to the themes of gardening, the payment of debts, mining, and harvesting, are fused into a whole through the logical

coherence of Carew's comments on Donne's genius and originality. Even here, however, Carew shows his allegiance to a dual tradition, concluding with a Jonsonian epitaph:

Here lies a King, that rul'd as hee
thought fit
The universall Monarchy of wit;
Here lie two Flamens, and both those,
the best,
Apollo's first, at last, the true Gods
priest.

Carew's contrasting styles could scarcely be seen more clearly than by comparing the poem on Donne with the simple "Epitaph on the Lady Mary Villers," a lyric much like many of Jonson's elegies:

This little Vault, this narrow roome,
Of Love, and Beautie is the tombe;
The dawning beame that 'gan to cleare
Our clouded skie, lyes darkned here,
For ever set to us, by death
Sent to enflame the world beneath;
'Twas but a bud, yet did containe
More sweetnesse then shall spring againe
A budding starre that might have
growne
Into a Sun, when it had blowne
This hopefull beautie, did create
New life in Loves declining state;
But now his Empire ends, and we
From fire, and wounding darts are free:
His brand, his bow, let no man feare
The flames, the arrowes, all lye here.

Carew here draws skillfully on the classical tradition for the reference to Cupid and for the brevity and conciseness of his form. His handling of the tetrameter line is, throughout his works, masterful, and he achieves an elegiac spirit almost as moving in its simplicity as Jonson's epitaph on Elizabeth, L. H.:

Under-neath this stone doth lye
As much beautie, as could dye.

In addition to the love songs and elegies that make up the majority of Carew's poems, he wrote several long verse epistles, modeled on those of Horace and Jonson's imitations of them. These works foreshadow the long reflective poems of

the neo-classic age; written in heroic couplets, they are meditative, philosophical, occasionally satirical, essentially conversations in verse. In one of these epistles, addressed "To Ben Jonson, upon Occasion of his Ode of Defiance annex to his Play of the New Inne," Carew mildly and sympathetically chides his aging master for allowing the strictures of contemporary critics to move him; though Jonson may have created all his works, like children, with equal love, onlookers "may distinguish of their sexe, and place":

Let others glut on the extorted praise
Of vulgar breath, trust thou to after
dayes:

Thy labour'd workes shall live, when
Time deuoures

Th' abortive off-spring of their hastie
houres.

Thou art not of their ranke, the quar-
rell lyes

Within thine own Virge, then let this
suffice,

The wiser world doth greater Thee con-
fesse

Then all men else, then Thy selfe
onely lesse.

The epistle to Aurelian Townshend, a minor poet who had addressed to Carew verses requesting him to write an elegy on the recently deceased King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, a powerful military commander, gives interesting insight into Carew's sense of his function as a poet. He is no chronicler of heroic deeds:

But these are subjects proper to our
clyme

Tourneyes, Masques, Theaters, better
become

Our Halcyon dayes; what though the
German Drum

Bellow for freedome and revenge, the
noyse

Concernes not us, nor should divert our
joyes.

Revels and pastoral poetry are the most suitable for him and Townshend, not the chronicles of heroes; he seems to have had no sense that the "halcyon dayes" were soon to draw to a bloody close.

Carew's epistles covered a variety of subjects; as a court poet he often wrote verses welcoming courtiers who returned from abroad, congratulating members of the royal family on their birthdays or on the arrival of a new prince, or commending the plays and poems of his friends as they appeared before the public. His style varied with the subject matter, shifting from Jonsonian clarity and straightforwardness to the intricate vocabulary of the followers of Donne. The latter mode predominates in lines like the following, from the epistle "To my worthy friend Master George Sands, on his translation of the Psalmes":

I Presse not to the Quire, nor dare I
greet

The holy place with my unhallowed
feet;

My unwasht Muse, Pollutes not things
Divine,

Nor mingles her prophaner notes with
thine;

Here, humbly at the porch she listning
stayes,

And with glad eares sucks in thy sacred
layes.

Carew's most extended work is his masque, *Coelum Britannicum*, presented at Whitehall in 1634. The intellectual content of this work far surpasses that of the other Caroline masques, in which theme and dialogue were generally sacrificed to elaborate dances and complex stage effects. For the subject of the masque and for the content of most of the prose passages Carew drew upon the work of the late sixteenth century Italian philosopher, Giordano Bruno. The plot concerns a revolution on Mount Olympus; the gods have been so moved by the virtue of the English monarchs that they have resolved to reform, and all the constellations, which represent the old morality, have been banished from the sky. Momus and Mercury, given the task of choosing worthy figures to replace them, listen to the claims of several bizarre figures: Wealth, Poverty, Fortune, and Pleasure. Each of these professes to be

the most influential force in determining human actions. The masque ends with an elaborate pageant glorifying the virtues of King Charles and Henrietta Maria; the monarch and his courtiers, dressed as British Heroes, take their places in the heavens as the new constellations.

Carew was probably the ablest of all the Cavalier poets. He shows, in flashes,

an intellectual depth and a control of language that suggest his potential greatness. However, his poetic output was limited, partly by his own preference for the gay life of the court, partly by the poetic fashions of his day. He seems to have lacked that spark of genius which can transform conventions and the techniques of others into great original work.

THE POETRY OF CAVAFY

Author: Constantine P. Cavafy (Konstantinos P. Kabaphes, 1863-1933)

Principal published works: *Poemata*, 1935 (*Poems*); in English, *The Poems of C. P. Cavafy*, translated by John Mavrogordato, 1951; *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, translated by Rae Dalven, 1961

When E. M. Forster published, in 1923, his small book of Alexandrian sketches called *Pharos and Pharillon*, he included a short essay on the poetry of Cavafy—or Konstantinos P. Kabaphēs, to give the Greek form of his name. The poet was described as he was about to begin an interminable sentence dealing with the duplicity of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus in the year 1096. With great charm and sympathy Forster then proceeded to indicate his own appreciation of Cavafy's poetry. But though a few people, including W. H. Auden, valued this poetry highly, it remained almost unknown outside the Greek world.

The poet's background put him outside the main current of modern European literature, for his family, on both the paternal and maternal sides, was Greek from Constantinople, though his father's family had settled in Alexandria in the middle of the last century. The poet himself lived in both cities, and it was during his residence in Constantinople with his mother's family that he developed his great interest in Byzantine history, the study of which is reflected in many of his poems. He was also involved as a young man in a literary movement, known as the "New Life," that is totally unfamiliar to Western Europeans but which was important in modern Greek writing. This movement grew out of the

quarrel between the adherents of "pure" and of "demotic" Greek. Cavafy, like some other young writers, was interested in determining the value of the demotic language, the language of the people, as a literary vehicle. Although he had a great reverence for the pure, classic Greek of his intellectual heritage, in his poetry he combined with great skill this classical language with the demotic. This literary *tour de force* is, of course, meaningless to anyone who does not know both ancient and modern Greek, nor does the history of English literature offer a parallel situation.

Cavafy was a passionate "Panhellenic," a man enormously conscious of the long literary and intellectual tradition behind him. But a word should be said about what "Greek" meant to him. To the modern American, even though he has been reared in the last dim twilight of the classical system of education, "Greek" immediately conjures up the shades of Homer and of the tragic dramatists, the Athens of Pericles and of Plato; in short, what is usually called the Golden Age of Greek civilization. This, however, is not the Greek world with which Cavafy was concerned. What fascinated him and what the term "Greek" conveyed to him was the period in history that old-fashioned books used to call the Hellenistic Age; that is, the period following the

conquests of Alexander the Great, during which that monarch's vast empire was split into the smaller kingdoms that rimmed the Mediterranean and Greek culture was spread throughout the known world. Older historians of literature and art used, rather disdainfully, to refer to this as a period of decadence; but Cavafy, a modern Greek, obviously felt closer to it than to the age of Pericles. To this heritage, he added that of the Byzantine Empire, thus drawing together his two mother cities, Alexandria and Constantinople.

Cavafy's poems divide quite neatly into two categories. First there are the poems based on episodes from the Hellenistic world. These are, quite literally, learned poems, frequently annotated. For the average reader, not a specialist in Hellenistic history, is more than likely to find himself completely lost in the chronicles of the House of Seleucus and of the Kingdom of Syria, nor is he apt to be familiar with Antiochus Epiphanes or Ptolemy VI Philometer, any more than with such Byzantines as John Cantacuzenus or John Paleologus. For the background of these poems Cavafy turned to Herodotus and Plutarch as well as to much more obscure historians. There are also poems drawn from Homeric episodes and from more familiar bits of Roman history. In his work we find references to Sarpedon and the divine horses of Achilles, Antony, and Caesar. These poems are all vignettes, brief glimpses into history, bathed in a gentle irony. For Cavafy was quite aware that the Hellenistic world of which he wrote, the world of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, was merely a congerie of puppet kingdoms, that the richly dressed monarchs were themselves only puppets, for behind the gaily painted façade was the vast power of Rome, which allowed them to exist as long as Roman policy was served. Thus, in "Alexandrine Kings," the children of Cleopatra are brought out into the stadium in a brilliant procession to be given each a resounding series of titles:

one, King of Armenia, Media, and Parthia; another, of Cilicia, Syria, and Phoenicia; the eldest, King of Kings. The crowd cheers in the various tongues of the polyglot city, knowing well the hollow honors bestowed.

Even in Rome, mistress of the world, power is only an illusion: Nero, still young and splendidly strong, does not hear the iron footsteps of the Furies ascending the stairs, does not see his household gods tremble as they try to hide. Antony, on the balcony in Alexandria, hears the exquisite music of an invisible troupe as his god deserts him; Caesar will not read the writings of Artemidorus. Most delightfully is this irony at play in a little poem called "In a Township in Asia Minor." The citizens have composed an elegant address to Antony in honor of his overthrow of Octavius, but before the victory can be celebrated the news of Actium and Anthony's defeat arrives unexpectedly. However, it is easy enough to interchange the names, and everything fits in fine.

Another group of Cavafy's poems is composed of erotic poetry, all dealing with homosexuality. Cavafy made no effort to disguise his abnormality; on the other hand, he made no effort to romanticize it. It is presented simply as a fact in his life. There is nothing disagreeable about these poems; they deal with love, its loss, and its memory, but with a love that is inverted.

Cavafy was definitely outside the current of European poetry of his time. Though he began publishing as far back as 1895, his work reveals none of the many influences that have helped shape European poetry during the decades in which he was writing; there is nothing of the 1890's and nothing of modernism. His last poems are written in the same manner as were his earliest. His inspiration and his technique were derived from the Greek Anthology: the brevity, the poignancy, the irony, as well as the unadorned simplicity of language. There is nothing in modern English quite like his

work, for the Greek poems of H. D. were richer and more stately in their diction and lacked the irony of Cavafy's works. The nearest thing, for those who may remember the book, would be the translations of the "Anacreontea," included in Richard Aldington's *Medallions in Clay* of 1921, for these Alexandrine imitations of Anacreon were the same short love songs, the same gently mournful epitaphs.

It has been said that, even at its best, translation is "the wrong side of a Turkey carpet"; the viewer can get only a blurred impression of the colors and design that are so vivid when seen from the right side. What, of Cavafy's special qualities, has been lost in the process of turning his verse into English, only a reader of mod-

ern Greek can say. Auden thinks that the one quality that does survive the process of translation is the poet's individual tone of voice, which is always recognizable because it is unique. His work has what E. M. Forster considered an air of distinction. Cavafy never used figurative language; he achieved his effects with the utmost simplicity. It is the content and the very special point of view that count.

Cavafy's poems, aloof, ironic, detached, should appeal to any reader who has grown weary of the tortured syntax, the violent language, the deliberate straining after effect—in short, the pretentious monotony of so much modern verse.

THE POETRY OF CHATTERTON

Author: Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770)

Principal published works: *An Elegy on the Much-Lamented Death of Wm. Beckford . . .*, 1770; *Poems* (Supposed to have been written at Bristol by Thomas Rowley and others in the fifteenth century), 1777; *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, 1778; *Works*, 1803

Thomas Chatterton's poetry is usually divided into his own poems, published in his lifetime, and those of his alter ego, the imaginary monk "Thomas Rowley" whom Chatterton asserted wrote many of the "fifteenth century" poems allegedly transcribed from vellum manuscripts found in the muniment room of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol and carried off by his father, the sexton, as curiosities useful for covering schoolbooks. Chatterton is remembered for his incredible facility in meters, for his suicide at seventeen, and for his imposture. The worst aspect of his last claim to fame was his attempt to impose on Horace Walpole, who had written a history of the development of styles, a fabricated transcription of a description of English painting in the fifteenth century; this hoax was a continuation of that by which Chatterton first got into print, his equally false transcription of ceremonies marking the opening of the old bridge across the Severn at Bristol, which

Chatterton sent to the *Bristol Journal* in September, 1768, on the occasion of the opening of the new bridge. When he attempted to pass the Rowley poems as equally genuine, Chatterton became the victim not only of his provincial environment but of his age.

London and mid-eighteenth century England were booming with the mercantile revolution which was carrying British manufactures all over the world; the industrial and agricultural revolutions were shifting the bases of English society; the mental unrest and speculation accompanying these phenomena were pushing back the frontiers of space and time. Exotic locales were being employed in a literary style still grounded in classical modernation and exactitude, as in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* and his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. Further, a curiosity about the past literature of the British Isles produced at first all sorts of curiousness from the dark and deliciously

primitive past: the *Fragments* of the fake "Ossian" and Percy's *Reliques*. The classical temper fought to control the "night thoughts" and "sentimental journeys," but the public was infatuated with the Gothic. The whirlwind was reaped in the American and French revolutions and the Romantic Period before the century was out.

Chatterton shared and tried to capitalize on the changing taste of the time by creating a fifteenth century Bristol, his "city of refuge" as George Sherburn called it. In the verse and prose he managed to sell or publish from Bristol and, during his last four months, in London, he used conventional modes felicitously and sought the taste of time in his "African Eclogues" and the Rowley poems. But he could not endure the life of Grub Street and "perished in his pride," caught exactly in the middle of the clash between old style and new taste which Thomson earlier avoided in the *Seasons* and Crabbe later in *The Village*, the beginning and the end of the pre-Romantic pastoral. Chatterton became the property of the Romantics as "the marvellous boy" of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," which continues

We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

The romantic feeling toward Chatterton, at once the pathos of blighted youth and of pure genius, is summed up in the well-known painting of his deathbed by Wallis.

The nineteenth century held that the Rowley poems were superior to the rest, but a finer ear both for the eighteenth century conventions of and for the true Chaucerian language and meters has reversed the verdict.

Although Chatterton probably actually faked only a few short poems on parchment (those now in the British Museum), he was able to press most of the more than forty pieces known as the

Rowley poems on grateful but not penny-wise patrons in Bristol in the eighteen months between the opening of the bridge and his departure for London. These were turned over to F. Tyrwhitt for his edition in 1778 of the poems of "Thomas Rowley," confessor to William Canning, the Bristol merchant who restored St. Mary Redcliffe in the late fifteenth century. The rest of Chatterton's manuscripts, including the essay on painting he sent to Walpole and the glossary he constructed to antiquate the language of the Rowley poems, were probably lost in the drift of torn-up manuscripts that surrounded the poet on his deathbed.

The longest of the Rowley poems is "Ella," subtitled "A Tragycal Enterlude, or Discoorseynge Tragedie, Wrotten Bye Thomas Rowleie; Plaiedd Before Mastre Canynge," which is the tragedy of Aella, warden of "Bristowe" Castle, told in operatic and prolonged exchanges plentifully interrupted by the songs of minstrels and other interludes including a Soldier's Chorus.

On the eve of Aella's marriage to BIRTHA his friend, Celmonde, the disappointed lover of BIRTHA, vows vengeance:

Ytt cannotte, muste notte, naie, ytt
shalle not bee,
Thys nyghte I'll putte stronge poysonn
ynn the beere . . .

Before he can do so news comes of a Danish attack and Aella tears himself away from BIRTHA and, accompanied by Celmonde, defeats the Danes under a chief named Hurra; Celmonde posts back from the field of battle to Bristol and persuades BIRTHA to go with him to the wounded Aella; on the way, while they are traveling through a wood he attempts to seduce BIRTHA; but he is killed by the fleeing Hurra, who then escorts BIRTHA back to Aella. But Aella, unhappily returned to Bristol before her and convinced of her treachery, kills himself as BIRTHA appears. "Aella" is surrounded by dedicatory epistles, from Rowley to Canning,

and several other Rowley poems refer to this masterpiece. Another tragedy, "God-dwyn," is supposed to have been written and acted by Rowley for the entertainment of Canning.

The best known of the Rowley poems are probably "An Excellente Balade of Charitie," dated 1464, the first of the Rowley productions, and the "Bristowe Tragedie," a ballad of ninety-eight stanzas on the execution of "Syr Charles Bawdin," based on the execution for treason of Sir Baldewyn Fulford in 1461. Several poems are in ballad meter, but others show considerable variety of meters, such as the Spenserian stanza of the second version of the "Battle of Hastings." Chatterton's method was simply to write up an ancient occasion in a reasonably appropriate meter and then "antique" it with the help of his glossary; the antiquity can be easily faulted by mistakes in content and errors in language, just as the parchments are obviously antiqued with casual stains. A comparison of "The Romaunte of the Cnyghte," presented to a Bristol pewterer, an early patron mentioned in "Chatterton's Will," as a work by one of his ancestors, and "The Romance of The Knight" in his acknowledged poems show Chatterton's fatal facility in both quaint and conventional verse:

The woddie Grasse blanched the
Fenne . . .
Syr Knyghte dyd ymounte oponn a
Stede
Ne Romaunte ne Dryblette of
make . . .

The wrinkled grass its silver joys un-
fold . . .
The worthy knight ascends his foaming
steed,
Of size uncommon, and no common
breed . . .

The acknowledged poems are as varied as the Rowleys. The longest works are "The Revenge," the "burletta" which Chatterton sold for five guineas and

which was performed at Marylebone Gardens the year after his death, and a long satiric poem, "Kew Gardens." "The Revenge" burlesques in five scenes the classical gods Jove, Juno, Bacchus, and Cupid in a domestic squabble concerned with Jove's roving eye. Juno's revenge consists of pretending to be Maia, Jove's latest love. Bacchus confuses the issue by imitating Jove, and husband and wife are reconciled with Juno's promise to give over scolding. The recitative is in heroic couplets, the airs in a great variety of doggerel meters, the whole a spritely and slightly bawdy performance. "Kew Gardens" is over one thousand lines of "flyt-ing" at the statesmen and public figures of the day, including those Bristol patrons also satirized in "Chatterton's Will," the poem composed in April, 1770, which is supposed to have procured Chatterton's dismissal from his clerkship in the Bristol law office and to have prompted his journey to London.

Some of the other poems, such as "The Consuliad," are likewise in couplets and on public issues, but about half the poems are verse epistles to friends and young ladies in Bristol. The most interesting are the "Elegy on the Death of Mr. Phillips," a young Bristol acquaintance who stimulated Chatterton to write poetry, and the "African Eclogues," three short poems in what has been called the "Orinooko tradition": "Narva and Mored," "The Death of Nicou," and "Heccar and Gaira." Set in an Africa as rude and mysterious as the legendary past of Britain whence the ballads were revived, the eclogues anticipate the effect of "Kubla Khan" in these lines from "Narva and Mored":

Sudden beneath Toddida's whistling
brink,
The circling billows in wild eddies sink,
Whirl furious round, and the loud
bursting wave
Sinks down to Chalma's sacerdotal cave.

The "Elegy" is a perfectly formal eighteenth century expression of sorrow,

ending with one of the very few references to the poet:

Few are the pleasures Chatterton e'er
knew,
Short were the moments of his transient
peace;
But melancholy robb'd him of those
few,
And this hath bid all future comfort
cease.

He knows, however, that the course of his tragedy lies in the disparity between his situation in the provinces and his remarkable gifts. The "Elegy" on Phillips concludes:

And each and every couplet I have
penn'd,
But little labour'd, and I never mend.

And in "Chatterton's Will" he addresses his greedy, gullible, and mean provincial patrons:

If ever obligated to thy purse,
Rowley discharges all—my first chief
curse!

For had I never known the antique lore,
I ne'er had ventured from my peaceful
shore,

To be the wreck of promises and hopes,
A Boy of Learning, and a Bard of
Tropes.

THE POETRY OF CLARE

Author: John Clare (1793-1864)

Principal published works: *Poems of Rural Life*, 1820; *The Village Minstrel*, 1821; *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 1827; *The Rural Muse*, 1834

Country-born and country-bred, enjoying literary success in London until the late 1820's, ending his days in a madhouse: the curve of John Clare's life is important to appreciate in any reading of his poetry. Clare's roots in the language and customs of the country, more specifically of the little village of Helpstone on the borders of the Lincolnshire Fens, is immediately evident in his earlier poems, as are his extremely delicate perceptions, the totalism of a sensibility nearly always hovering on the edge either of ecstasy or despair. Less evident are his strong literary affiliations with the Thomson of *The Seasons*, the Wordsworth of the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," the Byron of *Childe Harold*. With Burns, Clare is one of the finest of the "original geniuses" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, writing in a vein more authentic and serious than most of the other poetical plowboys, threshers, milkmaids, or cobblers then in vogue. His own Northamptonshire version of the conserving myth of the countryside, eloquently expressed in his lament for the loss of Swordy Fell by the enclosures of the

1820's, is in the line of Gray and Wordsworth and points directly to the writings of Barnes and Hardy later in the nineteenth century.

Clare's provincialism, his distance from the literary fashions of his early manhood, permitted him to mine his slender gift deeply. Again and again he returns to the themes, the moral and technical elements which are present in his earliest poems. The same subjects are to him always new and pressing: the importance of place, the loss of childhood innocence, the destruction of the countryside, absence in love, the poet as nature's spokesman. There is an uncomplicated resting in nostalgic description rather than a thrusting and exploratory meditation; there is no Wordsworthian straining after the philosophical poem, and Clare's successes are therefore more limited but purer than Wordsworth's.

Clare's ordinary medium is the loosened heroic couplet, the informal ballad stanza, the simple quatrain of the later Augustans, and he is not above using the "poetic diction" which Wordsworth explicitly rejected. Clare's originality was

not one of perspective or technique so much as it was the focusing of a single-minded intensity upon the problems and perceptions of the countryman. The "ecstasy" Clare so often alludes to explains much in the tone of his poems on nature and on human love; but it is also directly related to a personal instability, the delicacy or fragility which led to the madness he himself had been anticipating.

Clare begins one of his best poems thus: "Hail, humble Helpstone. . . . Unletter'd spot! unheard in poet's song." The peculiarly Romantic celebration of the local and unique is here, but also a sense that the obscure village may be taken as standing for hundreds of others like it, places finally being encroached upon by wealth and civilization. The enclosure of the common forage lands, and the leveling of the woodlands, are Clare's concern even as early as this poem of 1809:

How oft I've sigh'd at alterations made,
To see the woodman's cruel axe employ'd
A tree beheaded, or bush destroy'd. . . .

The resulting conviction that nature is herself somehow threatened accounts for some of the loving anxiousness in Clare's descriptions of both landscape and village life. One may take for an instance the fine stanza from "Summer Images":

To note on hedgrow baulks, in moisture spent,
The jetty snail creep from the mossy thorn,
With earnest heed and tremulous intent,
Frail brother of the morn,
That from the tiny bent's dew-misted leaves
Withdraws his timid horn,
And fearful vision weaves.

The descriptive vignette, complete in a stanza, is characteristic. Clare is a cataloguer, a poet who, with an evocative title ("Morning," "Autumn") or a generalizing opening, launches a poem organized mainly into a progression of

instances. "Noon" begins multiplying instances and images with the second line of the poem:

All how silent and how still;
Nothing heard but yonder mill:
While the dazzled eye surveys
All around a liquid blaze;
And amid the scorching gleams,
If we earnest look, it seems
As if crooked bits of glass
Seemed repeatedly to pass. . . .
Not a twig is seen to shake,
Nor the smallest bent to quake;

"Liquid blaze," though obviously a piece of poetic diction, is nevertheless a small triumph of authenticity.

In line with this effect is Clare's inclination to relate human moods to the four seasons. One remembers his comment that the first poetry which genuinely moved him was Thomson's *The Seasons*. Perhaps the finest of his nature poems is "Autumn," written in the unrhymed stanza of Collins' "Ode to Evening":

Soon must I view thee as a pleasant dream
Droop faintly, and so reckon for thine end,
As sad the winds sink low
In dirges for their queen;

While in the moment of their weary pause,
To cheer thy bankrupt pomp, the willing lark
Starts from his shielding clod,
Snatching sweet scraps of song.

Here as elsewhere we find comparisons made between nature and human nature. This analogy works both ways; sometimes there are such phrases as "wind-enchanted aspen" ("Summer Images"). At other times childhood and virginity find images in the blooming of trees or flowers: "Young Jenny blooming in her womanhood/That hides from day like lilies while in bud." In the poems of Clare's madness, when he writes of the impossibility of recovering his childhood, or of repossessing the unblemished love of his first sweetheart, Mary Joyce, he

unconsciously connects his loss with the moods of the natural world. He longs "for scenes, where man hath never trod," where he can

. . . sleep as I in childhood sweetly
slept,
Untroubling, and untroubled where I
lie,
The grass below—above the vaulted
sky.

In such poems as "The Village Minstrel," "To the Rural Muse," "Pastoral Poesy," and "The Progress of Rhyme," Clare sets forth the naïve poetics which informs all his lyric utterance. He engages in a radical but fruitful confusion of the process of writing and the observation of natural phenomena: "Wordsworth I love, his books are like the fields" ("To Wordsworth"); "True poesy is not in words,/ But images that thoughts express," and observation affords "A language that is ever green. . . . As hawthorn blossoms, soon as seen,/ Give May to every heart." ("Pastoral Poesy"). It is one indication of Clare's provinciality that he meant these lines quite literally.

The most important result of this assumption about the nature and function of poetry is Clare's accuracy of image and phrase. Where the countryman's English is most apt, he will use it though the effect is idiosyncratic:

—And never choose
The little sinky foss,
Streaking the moors whence spa-red
water spews
From pudges fringed with moss. . . .

No animal, insect, or scene is too insignificant to bear description: "I see. . . . I see" is one of Clare's most habitual phrases, and when he writes of "shower-bedimpled sandy lanes," "smoke-tanned chimney tops," or "broad old cesspools" which "glittered in the sun," he is bringing new veridical images into English poetry. In "Eternity of Nature," Clare praises the Power behind nature by a marvelously convincing collection of the

ways the number five recurs in the phenomena of the world:

So trailing bindweed, with its pinky
cup,
Five leaves of paler hue go streaking
up;
And many a bird, too, keeps the rule
alive,
Laying five eggs, nor more nor less
than five.

Keats thought that Clare was too descriptive, that the images from nature tend in his poetry to remain instances rather than being integrated with sentiment and meditation. The judgment is correct as far as it goes; we must allow Clare his visual accuracy but we must finally match his descriptive success against the larger enterprise of Wordsworth, who risked his poetry itself to make it a moral and teaching medium. In Wordsworth and Keats, observation leads more quickly to meditation than in Clare, a poet who does not explore the more symbolic uses of the natural image.

Clare is best known for lyric poetry which nevertheless poses serious questions about life and death and eternity. His longer works have many of the same qualities of observation to recommend them. "The Village Minstrel" and "Childe Harold" are both autobiographical, both charged with the same kind of visual acuity one finds in the shorter poems. One gets from these two poems some sense of what the "Eden" of Clare's humble childhood was like in a poor agricultural community. Clare himself never tires of emphasizing that it was in fact a genuine community; this is the burden of the excellent poem on the labors and customs of a country village presented in *The Shepherd's Calendar*. Here Clare describes the work, the sport, the violence, and the frank sexuality of provincial farm communities in the early nineteenth century (the honesty of his genre scenes, like the impetuous couplets of the poem, stand in vivid contrast to the centuries earlier *The Shepherdes Calendar*

of Edmund Spenser. Clare's "Poems Written in Madness" remain to be described, yet there is no way to describe them in terms or categories other than those used above to discuss poems written before his confinement for madness. The fact is that the superb poems from this

period—"To Wordsworth," "Written in a Thunderstorm," "I've Wandered Many a Weary Mile," "I Am," "Hesperus"—represent only an unconscious focusing on the elements of despair and absence already conveyed earlier in Clare's work.

THE POETRY OF CLAUDEL

Author: Paul Claudel (1868-1955)

First published: *Poems of Exile*, 1892; *Five Grand Odes*, 1910; *Corona Benignatatis Anni Dei*, 1914

The two great poets of the first third of the twentieth century in France were Paul Valéry and Paul Claudel. It is instructive to contrast them, for they are precisely opposites in almost every respect. Claudel was a public man in terms of personality and profession; Valéry was a private man. Valéry was a poet of the self and mind; his poetic method was hyperconscious, he rejected the idea of poetic inspiration, and his total output of forty-three poems is exquisitely polished, rigidly controlled, and desperate in search of abstract purity. Claudel was a poet not of the self but of man and God. His literary output is staggering: over a hundred volumes of all kinds of writing. He frankly relied on enthusiasm and inspiration; he inevitably avoided the abstract, or transmuted it into lush sensual imagery; and while his poetry achieved its own kind of form, it is not polished and precise, but bardic and overflowing. Both poets used the sea as an important symbol in their poetry. Valéry's sea is a still, crystalline equivalent for changeless, abstract thought; Claudel's sea is a swelling, turbulent force, almost impossible to control, representing God, life, grace, inspiration, and poetry itself.

Claudel's poetry has two fundamental sources, both, in his terms, spiritual, both capable of bestowing grace. The first is poetic sensibility (the muse), the other, God. Claudel was committed to both by remarkable emotional experiences in 1886. At that time, when he was eight-

een, he was in the midst of what he described as a spiritual famine. The intellectual and artistic milieu of Paris was dominated by deterministic, scientific philosophies and by naturalistic and realistic literary techniques. All of this, with its focus on the "real," material world, seemed empty and unsatisfying to the young poet. Also, while his family was Catholic by tradition, religion was a passive thing in Claudel's life at this time.

Then in 1886 Claudel read Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. This poetry and other Symbolist verse seemed to break through the deadening circle of materialism that was smothering Claudel. The non-rational techniques, and anti-realistic concerns of the Symbolists gave him an almost physical impression of the supernatural. Their poetry both tied together and liberated language and the spirit. Claudel had found a way to write the kind of poetry his outgoing and anti-materialist soul wanted to pour out.

Added to this sudden literary experience was a vivid religious conversion. Claudel, a nominal Catholic, went to the Cathedral of Notre-Dame to witness the Christmas mass. Drawn to the Church, he returned later in the afternoon to the vespers service. While standing beside a pillar in the church, God suddenly and loudly spoke to Claudel, calling him by name. This experience, as Claudel says, dominated the rest of his life. All doubt was removed; he had been given grace and faith. From that time Claudel never

ceased to believe or to write. Combining his literary and religious conversions, he completely identified poetry and faith. He was able thenceforth to speak of Grace who is the Muse and the Muse who is Grace.

As a result of this double commitment, Claudel wrote poetry which sought at the same time to present the essence of the spirit and the essence of language. To accomplish this end he developed and wrote in a free verse form called the *verset*. He was inspired in this development by the rhetoric of the Bible and the high styles of Pindar and Aeschylus. Language, for Claudel, was essentially oral; it must be spoken, not merely written, by the poet, and its poetic use must be determined by the way it sounds at any given instant. Each line is to be constructed and bound together in a musical unit as the poem composes it. The poet need not rely on a rigid predetermined pattern of syllables and rhymes and stanzas to achieve his music. He can rely on his ear and his inspiration. This *verset* unit of composition was perfectly fitted to Claudel's poetic needs, for he was at his poetic best in long, free flowing odes and hymns in which flexibility in form is needed to match the changing and rushing curve of his inspiration. Further, granted this freedom, the poet was able to soar unrestrained (except by his inner sense of artistic control) after that essence of the spirit he so steadily sought in the essence of language and statement; he was able to project and dramatize his sense of the solemnity and the wonder of God and God's creation.

Claudel's poems seek to be what he is talking about, not to say it. As Claudel himself says in one place, a poem does not explain anything any more than a flower does.

If Claudel's poetry is characterized by a single overall view of the world, it can probably be stated as follows: Man has two histories. One is set in the disorder of the temporal world; the other is set in the perfect order of eternity and heaven.

These two histories together add up to Creation, and Creation is the poet's subject. Since these two histories in Creation are simultaneous and interpenetrating, the poet's task is to catch, present, and glorify their simultaneity in specific instants. Everywhere he looks, Claudel sees God's eternal order permeating man's perpetual disorder. A poetry that can accomplish this is a total poetry, a true poetry, that makes God, God's glory, and God's grave visible in artistic beauty: this total poetry was Claudel's goal.

Connected to this overall view is Claudel's never-failing message of hope: man and the world are capable of, and will be saved through, their resemblance to each other in God. They are like God, and, thus godlike.

A good introduction to Claudel's vast body of poetry is the early volume *Poems of Exile* (*Vers d'exil*), published in 1892. These eleven poems were written in 1887, just a few months after Claudel's conversion. In them, the poet has not yet found his characteristic voice; the poems and the expression are neatly formal, but the seeds of the mature Claudel are there.

Corona Benignatatis Anni Dei, published in 1914, which has been translated into English under the title *Coronal*, shows Claudel at the peak of his poetic maturity. This large collection is divided into six parts. Each part is self-sufficient, but together they add up to a complete celebration of the Christian year. The collection is made up of a series of hymns and poems to various saints, the twelve apostles, the stations of the cross, and the mass. The tone of the collection is one of solemn joy and contemplation.

But the best and greatest of Claudel's collections of poetry is undoubtedly his *Five Great Odes* (*Cinq Grand Odes*), published in 1910. These poems represent Claudel's definitive use of the *verset* technique in which he translates his spiritual itinerary into rhetoric, rhythm, and imagery. In the first of the odes, "The Muses," the poet is looking at an old

Roman sarcophagus on which are carved the nine muses. The poet invokes them one by one, describing their respective functions and defining their role in the process of inspiration. Claudel, in effect, writes an Art of Poetry in this piece. The image of the sea comes to dominate the poem, symbolizing liberty and motion, and the muses become the incarnations of the impatience of the Holy Spirit and its sea-like, cosmic rhythm.

In the second ode, "The Spirit and the Waters," Claudel, in order to free his imagination, meditates on the symbolism of the waters. He discovers the universal dynamic that, always moving ties together the world, man, and God. In "Magnificat," the third ode, the poet, thinking of the benefits of God, raises a song of thanksgiving. But among these benefits, Claudel sees false idols: everything the modern world has invented, inspired by Satan, to obscure the vision of God's creation. These idols are, at last, the things that have deadened the spirit and

hope of modern man. Poetry is seen as a way for man to pierce the veil thrown up by the idols and to help man once more see God.

The fourth ode, "The Muse Who is Grace," is a dialogue between the muse and the poet. The subject of their discussion is the difficulty of traveling the distance between human nature and grace. In "The Closed House," the final poem in the collection, Claudel gives an answer to the people, who call him an obscure poet. If we do not understand you, they say, you do not open our hearts to grace, and you have failed us. Again the poet and his muse have a dialogue. She explains that the poet's present solitude is necessary, that he has given what he can. All men are locked in the closed house of the world. At the conclusion of the poem, the poet addresses the then new twentieth century and calls man back to the Church. The last page of the book is a prayer for the dead.

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

Author: Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

First published: *Poems on Various Subjects*, 1796; *Poems: Second Edition*, 1797; *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798 (with Wordsworth); *Christabel*, 1816; *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817; *Poetical Works*, 1828

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the most complex and richly suggestive writers in English. Poet, philosopher, critic, and, not infrequently, genius, he has left an indelible mark on the history of English poetry and criticism. His major critical work, *Biographia Literaria*, stands as the source of much modern critical theory. With William Wordsworth, Coleridge led the "Romantic revolt" in English poetry. They asserted not only that the source of poetry is the ordinary life and language of men, but also reasserted the validity and beauty of the imagination. Coleridge's poetry is not voluminous, and the great pieces were nearly all written in a space of from two to five years, but at his best his poems are rich in

their concrete, forthright evocation of the psychological and the mysterious.

Coleridge believed in the "feeling heart," in the spiritual power of the individual imagination to apprehend, in images of beauty, the completeness and harmonious beauty of God's creation. He was, therefore, the first of the English idealistic Romantics who asserted the primacy of the inner vision in the face of eighteenth century theories of materialism and mechanical, sense-bound perception. He derived from the German idealists, notably the Schlegels and Schelling and through them, Kant, many of his ideas of reason and imaginative vision, both of which qualities free men from bondage to the senses alone.

His earlier poetry is notable for its subtly patterned use of ordinary speech and its quiet, imaginative manipulation of scene and mood.

Low was our pretty cot; our tallest Rose
Peeped at the chamber-window. We
could hear

At silent noon, and eve, and early morn,
The sea's faint murmur: In the open
air

Our myrtles blossomed; and across the
porch

Thick jasmins twined: The little land-
scape round

Was green and woody, and refreshed
the eye.

Here is a distinctive ease of manner, of rhythm and direct observation which, as in Wordsworth's verse and according to the credo announced in his Preface to their *Lyrical Ballads*, replaces the artificially poetic, "literary" manner of much eighteenth century verse. An example of how Coleridge can develop a passage of such simplicity into a more elaborate vision may be found in "The Nightingale." He does so without sacrificing the basic tone and texture of ordinary speech. Here, he writes disapprovingly of the closeted, ink-horn poet:

Poet who hath been building up the
rhyme

When he had better far have stretched
his limbs

Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell,
By Sun or Moon-light, to the influxes
Of shapes and sounds and shifting ele-
ments

Surrendering his whole spirit, of his
song

And of his name forgetful! so his fame
Should share in Nature's immortality,
A venerable thing!

The alliteration and the repetition of prepositional phrases create a heightened effect, expressive of Coleridge's faith, not in a poetry of midnight oil, but of a direct, spiritual connection between man and actual nature. As Coleridge's poetry developed, however, he became even more strikingly the poet of the imagina-

tion, of the supernatural, as is evidenced in such poems as "Kubla Khan" and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

For though Coleridge shared with Wordsworth a desire to return poetry to the ordinary, the concrete, and the language of speech, he was also desirous of discovering the spiritual, supernatural principles of unity within, and lying behind, the concretely sensed multiplicity of ordinary experience. Thus, he writes, the best style is that written "when the author has had his own eye fixed steadily on the abstract, yet permits his readers to see only the concrete." Accordingly, Coleridge expresses his conception of poetry in terms of a synthesis of imaginative vision and of actual perception, of "outer" and "inner," in other words, of "object" and "subject." His earlier verse usually had nature as the "object," but later poems approach treatment of the symbolic, mythic, and general consciousness of the inner man. Myths of death and symbolic rebirth predominate. Historically, this conception of poetry, a synthesis of the individual and subjective with the concrete and objective, moves sharply away from neoclassic doctrines of a poetry as imitation governed by rules. To Coleridge, art is less imitative than "organic"; a poem is a growing unity, the parts related to one another and all comprising a whole. The "end" of poetry is pleasure, not instruction, and yet a poem tells a higher truth. A poem expresses "a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order." The order, however, is not imposed from without, by aid of rules for writing poems, nor according to agreed-upon "laws" of nature. The order grows out of the synthesizing power of the individual imagination. Indeed, according to Coleridge's notion, the creative act of the imagination is first a breaking down of the usual sensations and perceptions of outward reality, and then a synthesizing, a reconstruction of that outward reality by means of an inner vision to produce "a new unity, a new reality." This conception of the "creative imagina-

tion" and of "organic unity" underlies nearly all modern criticism.

Coleridge's desire for synthesis and unity marked all his thinking and writing. Any tendency toward isolation or fragmentation, whether in idea or in his personal life, was an occasion for regret and even despair. Many of his best poems lament a fall from communion, a loss of harmony, and celebrate a revival of companionship, of unity both personal and moral. He ever tried to express his sense of the underlying Oneness of the world, the great created Cosmos of God, Who is, in these terms, the original and most sublime Artist. The poet-as-seer and idealist must try to achieve a vision, however partial, of this divine wholeness.

"Dejection, an Ode" records a sense of failure in trying to achieve such harmony, and the poem marks the approximate end of Coleridge's brief and brilliant "great period" as a poet. "Dejection" was first published on Wordsworth's wedding day. Perhaps there is some significance in that fact, for their vital partnership, which had helped both so much, was ending. "Dejection" begins in the conversational tone noted earlier.

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise
who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick
Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not
go hence
Unaroused by winds. . . .

The tone sounds somewhat rueful, a trifle bitter; one notices, too, the firmer cadence of this mature poetry: simple, yet beautifully molded. Coleridge refers here to the prophecy of storm in that ballad ("And I fear, I fear, my Master Dear! / We shall have a deadly Storm"), and the disarming tone of the opening lines gives way, naturally and "organically," to the dirgelike cadences which express the poet's inner turmoil:

My genial spirits fail,
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off
my breast?

Disharmony has soured the visionary's glimpse of Nature's goodness:

Hence viper thoughts, that coil around
my mind,
Reality's dark dream!

Coleridge, not unlike Wordsworth, had often felt that Nature brought him solace and pleasure. Nature was an "Eolian Harp," making a kind of cosmic music. Now, he welcomes the storm, whose sound had before "sent my soul abroad." He hopes that the sounds

Might now their wonted impulse give,
Might startle the dull pain, and make
it move and live!

But the poet has lapsed into a state of alienation from Nature, and from his most natural self. His inner sadness has closed him off, isolated him. Addressing his "lady," he describes the beauty of the evening sky and stars:

I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

The old source of solace, wonder and "feeling" is shut off from him. His inner self has shrunk, and so he can no longer make, personally, that vital synthesis between inner and outer vision. He makes, instead, a poem out of the failure, a poem which still deals, negatively, with the old harmony.

O Lady! We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live:

Coleridge next writes a stanza which is, in effect, a hymn to joy, and he states that man and nature are wedded in joy, and as a dowry man gets "A new Earth and new Heaven." But the poet has lost such capacity for joy and has, as well, lost "my shaping spirit of imagination." Stoically, then, he will take refuge in patience and "abstruse research" in an attempt to escape the personal pain. He turns to the wild mountain storm for some solace, and calls the wind a "mad lutanist," befitting his dark soul. Silence comes, and then a softer sound, or moan, appears to sing

sadly of a lost child. The image of that lost child, growing organically out of both the theme and imagery of the poem, becomes on a deeper level symbolic of Coleridge himself, lost, afraid, cut-off. Like the ancient mariner, he is adrift, at sea, and such images are recurrent in the poetry. The child-wanderer and the spellbound damsel symbolize both Coleridge's creative imagination and his fear of losing that creative power of attaining unity. So "Dejection" ends poignantly enough with an appeal to the stars to bring his "lady," his friend, joy—for they remind him only of sorrow.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner also deals with the theme of isolation, frustration, and symbolic renewal. The ballad form of the poem indicates Coleridge's preference for the poetry of the folk, dealing often mysteriously but always concretely with significant human actions. Ballads preserve the supernatural within the ordinary, and their simple yet highly patterned form and language appealed to Coleridge, and his most memorable verse is built on the ballad form.

The story of the mariner who shoots the albatross, symbol of divine beneficence, and who thereby brings upon himself a curse, but who is finally released from the curse by blessing in his heart, in spite of his lonely suffering, the beauty of the mysterious water-snakes, is familiar to all readers. What should be emphasized is that it is through the mariner's opening of his heart to God's created creatures that his release from the curse is brought about. His tale sobers the wedding guests, for it warns of how the "wedding" of man and woman, man and nature, is dependent, as both image and idea repeat in "Dejection," on a creative, joyful communion with all of nature. The springs of life lie under the surface and are mysterious, and such is the effect of the mariner's experience and tale.

Formally, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is notable for its swiftness of narration, its vivid imagery, and Coleridge's sure-handed use of a modified bal-

lad measure. Important and dramatic details are given quickly, increasing both the economy and dramatic effect of the poem. Thus, when a wedding guest wonders why the tormented old mariner tells this tale, the crucial fact is abruptly supplied.

God save thee, ancient mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!
Why look'st thou so?— With my cross-
bow
I shot the Albatross.

The visual detail, suggestive and mysterious, is omnipresent:

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

Repetition, alliteration, and the subtle use of refrain, often incremental, produce the eerie, chanting effect of the masterwork, in which the symbolic meanings of spiritual death and rebirth find fully adequate objective terms, both in the imagery and in the dramatic situation of the mariner and the wedding guest.

Christabel, written earlier but left incomplete, was not published until 1816. In a preface to the poem, Coleridge explains how the meter is based on the number of accents, regardless of the number of unaccented syllables. This, in fact, is the simple principle behind Gerard Manley Hopkins' "sprung" rhythm. Again, the form and effect is that of a modified ballad-narrative, and the story is both swiftly told and richly endowed with imaginative detail. *Christabel*, while praying in the woods at night for her betrothed, is interrupted by Geraldine, who is, in fact, a supernatural creature, a witch, apparently bent on doing harm. Geraldine herself is deformed and isolated, cut off from human sympathy. *Christabel* is permitted to see through the disguise when the two spend a night together, but she is silenced by a spell.

Bracy, the bard, is sent to tell Geraldine's supposed father, Lord Roland, that

the young woman is well. As in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the theme of estrangement and reunion is touched on here, for Sir Leoline and Lord Roland, once friends, are now estranged, and on this occasion Sir Leoline suddenly desires a reconciliation. But Bracy as poet-seer, has also felt the evil presence, and is reluctant to leave on his mission. Sir Leoline is angered at his daughter Christabel's inhospitality; he appears to have fallen in love with Geraldine. The poem is incomplete, and the short conclusion to Part Two really solves none of the logical or narrative questions. Thus, the poem lurks in the imagination, somehow mysterious, psychologically profound, haunting. Themes of purity and guilt, of isolation, estrangement, and reunion are all working, but *Christabel* remains an enigma.

The same is true of Coleridge's most famous fragment, the drug-induced "Kubla Khan." This poem expresses a dream-vision in which Coleridge's genius

for weird, mysterious, and yet concretely realized poetic effects is most in evidence. Coleridge himself claimed no "poetic" merits for the piece (having in mind, no doubt, the requirement that a poem be a whole), and he published it as a "curiosity" at Byron's request. Dreamed while Coleridge was ill and under the influence of a prescribed anodyne, its "two or three hundred" subconscious lines became, upon wakeful reconstruction, the fifty-four or so that we know. These describe a sacred river, a fountain, "a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice," where Kubla Khan hears "ancestral voices prophesying war!" As in most of Coleridge's great poems, perhaps it is that the mysterious evocations rouse, in our "collective unconscious," "ancestral voices."

At any rate, the fragment is a vivid image of the mysterious vitality of nature set against the recurring and conflicting paroxysms of human dreams, desires, and actions. It is, in a sense, the epitaph of a dejected genius.

THE POETRY OF COLLINS

Author: William Collins (1721-1759)

Principal published works: *Persian Eclogues*, 1742; *An Epistle: Verses Humbly Address'd to Sir Thomas Hanmer on his Edition of Shakespear's Works*, 1744; *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects*, 1746; "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland," 1788 (written c. 1749)

The standard anthology view of Collins, one of the most important eighteenth century precursors of English Romanticism, is misleading. The three poems by which he is generally known, "Ode to Evening," "How Sleep the Brave," and "The Passions," more adequately reflect the general tradition of mid-eighteenth century poetry than they do Collins' pre-Romanticism and his individuality and achievement as a poet. It is comparatively easy to acquire a fuller and more just knowledge of Collins' work, however, for he left only two dozen poems before his last long illness and early death. Among them are his juvenilia, the four *Persian Eclogues*; several

songs; a verse epistle; and about fifteen odes. The eclogues and the epistle are largely uninspired and show only occasionally the poetic power which impresses one so much in the odes.

Though most of Collins' odes were written in the English Pindaric tradition, two of his better known poems, "How Sleep the Brave" and the "Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson," are Horatian in form. (Pindar was a sixth century B.C. Greek poet famous for his odes celebrating victories in athletic contests; his style is soaring, allusive, and complex. Horace, the model "classical" poet, was a first century Roman lyric poet whose style was direct and concise.) The English Pindaric

ode, though it always developed a single, central theme, meanders unpredictably through a series of situations which expand and comment on the central theme. The diction and imagery are rich and evocative, and the metrical pattern changes continually, though in an ordered system of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The English Horatian ode, on the other hand, goes directly to the point, is based on concise statement and plain diction, and uses a single, regular metrical stanzaic pattern.

Collins' verse exhibits at least five recurring themes. First, Collins is concerned with the role of fancy or imagination in poetry. He feels that fancy rather than reason, in the eighteenth century sense, is the essential trait of the poet and of poetry. Second, Collins is a critic of literature, and his criticism is conditioned by his concern for the imagination. He is quite dissatisfied with the literature of his own and most other periods. Third, Collins is interested in folklore and its use in literature, again mainly as a manifestation of imagination. Fourth, and at first glance rather out of character, he often emphasizes patriotic and political themes. Fifth, what almost amounts to a *leitmotif* rather than a conscious theme, Collins continually brings a psychological, almost clinical concern with emotion forward in his poems. This theme, of course, is also tied in with the problem of imagination, especially of Collins' own imagination.

Each of these five themes dominates a focal poem or group of poems; however, since each theme is related organically to the others, all or most of them appear in every poem. For example, the poems which are central to Collins' ideas about the role of imagination in literature are often the same poems in which he advances his critical judgments, since these two subjects are naturally two sides of the same problem. In the "Ode on the Poetical Character," Collins develops the idea that imagination is the soul of poetry. He likens the poet's act of creation to God's creation of the earth; God, like the poet,

is shown creating not when he is moved by a rational plan, but by sudden inspiration and imagination. In the same poem Collins, speaking as a literary critic, names Milton as the poet who last showed true poetic imagination. Waller, Milton's contemporary and the founder of the neo-classical tradition dominant in Collins' own day—the Augustan tradition of Pope and Johnson—is presented as the unimaginative antithesis of Milton. Collins, significantly, closes the poem with the claim that imaginative greatness is denied to himself and his contemporaries.

Among other poems which stress Collins' critical and esthetic theory are the verse epistle to Sir Thomas Hamner, the "Ode to Simplicity," which stresses literary form, "The Manners," the "Ode on the Popular Superstitions." The latter, which is written to a dramatist, advances the argument that folklore should again be used as the subject of English tragedy so that the genre might again reach the peaks it attained in Greece, in Shakespeare's day, and in the French tragedies of Racine and Corneille. Collins points out that all great dramatists have used myth and folktale as a basis for their tragedies.

But folklore and superstition play a more organic part in some of Collins' odes, notably the "Ode to Fear" (one of Collins' most impressive and most neglected poems), and the "Ode to Liberty." In these poems folklore is not a subject but a part of the poetic fabric. That is, Pindar, who was both the basis of the English lyric tradition in which Collins most often wrote, and the personal model of Collins—the epigraph to his 1746 publication of the *Odes* is from Pindar's eighth Olympian Ode—is admired for his use of myth as a means of allusion and poetic digression. It was natural that Collins, who continually voices dissatisfaction with the artistic techniques of his contemporaries, and who, because of his rather different poetic concerns, was naturally led to adopt the un-Augustan, Pin-

daric form, should try to introduce British folklore into the ode as a substitute for obsolete classical mythology. On the other hand, and on a deeper level, Collins was interested in superstition and folklore as food for the imagination. For the poet, to immerse oneself in the dark world of superstition was to open the gates of imagination and to reveal powerful visions.

To the reader interested in Collins as a pre-Romantic, the patriotic and political odes are something to be ignored or rationalized away as minor regression to neo-classicism. But this neglect is a mistake. Collins' interest in political and social ideals permeate his poetry precisely because he is interested in the poetic imagination and is, thus, strongly pre-Romantic. The political state, in Collins' eyes, is the most important external influence on the poet; the poetic imagination, he proclaims cannot flourish where freedom, liberty, justice are not present.

The fifth element in Collins' poetry, the psychological element, is pervasive enough to justify the statement that, all of his other concerns notwithstanding, Collins is essentially a poet of the mind and the mind's functioning. We see this quality even in the "Ode to Evening," Collins' most famous poem, which is, on the face of it, only a poem of pastoral, natural description in a typical eighteenth century mode. However, Collins is not interested in describing and evoking a natural scene for its own sake, as his friend James Thomson would have been in like circumstances. He is interested in nature as a reflection or projection of a poetic state of mind. But the most impressive effects of Collins' concern for the mind in its psychological aspect are seen in his treatment of the emotions and sensibility in such poems as the "Ode to Fear," the "Passions," and the "Ode on the Popular Superstitions." It is in these poems that we see Collins effectively using his most characteristic stylistic device, concrete personification of abstract ideas and emotional states. The poet

treats the emotions as personified, allegorical figures acting out their effects in an allegorized countryside of the mind. Certain parts of the "Ode to Fear," for example, are actually allegories of the mind functioning under the influence of fear. Collins addresses Fear:

Thou, to whom the World unknown
With all its shadowy Shapes is shown;
Who see'st appalled th' unreal Scene,
While Fancy lifts the Veil between:
Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear!
I see, I see Thee near.

Collins in this poem and in its companion piece, "Ode to Pity," is initially concerned with the Aristotelian pronouncement that the aesthetic effect of tragedy is to arouse pity and fear in the spectator. But Collins quickly moves from this critical idea into a world in which fear itself becomes the dominating reality, an emotion that Collins begs to dominate him so that he can learn to understand it and thus successfully create great drama. In return, Collins promises to live with fear forever after.

The other side of Collins' psychological concern is seen in his frequently announced wish, not for passion, but for peace of mind, and in his constant wish to withdraw from the turbulence of the world. In the odes to Pity, Simplicity, Evening, and others, and in the "Third Eclogue," Collins either expresses the desire to withdraw to a peaceful fantasy world, or portrays a scene of imaginary peace. The recurring symbol of the secluded "cell" or "shrine" is found in several poems. If the retreat is not into an imaginary world, it is into the past. All art and great artists, for Collins, are in the past, and it is in the past that he would most like to live.

In summary, Collins throughout his poetry insists that the passionate mind and the creative imagination are primary attributes of the poet. He is always conscious of imaginative deficiency in the art of his time, and, as he thinks, in himself. Paradoxically, this sense of lack that

the poet felt in himself disturbed him and led him to create a body of verse that

in fact embodies the standards he so fully valued.

THE POETRY OF CORBIÈRE

Author: Tristan Corbière (1845-1875)

Principal published work: *Les Amours Jaunes*, 1873

Tristan Corbière was born in Brittany in 1845 and died there thirty years later. He knew illness throughout his life and it even prevented him from completing his formal education. In a land of seafarers, he was acutely conscious of his physical debility. Corbière shares with other Breton writers of the nineteenth century—Chateaubriand, Lamennais, Renan—an exacerbated sensibility which is a major part of his outstanding originality. In his poems, the image which he presents of himself is never flattering. Indeed, Corbière seems greatly to have exaggerated his unattractive appearance.

Most of Corbière's poetic production is grouped in the collection entitled *Les Amours Jaunes*: literally *Yellow Loves* or *Off-Color Loves*. This collection, first published in 1873, went almost unnoticed. The title can scarcely be fully explained, for it seems to involve a characteristic, deliberate attempt at obfuscating originality on the part of the poet. The title may seem appropriate, however, after a reading of the pieces it covers. There are in fact many poems that might be considered the product of a sickly or jaundiced view of the world, though it must be stressed that Corbière's greatest strength may be traced back to this very vision.

The title of the first section of *Les Amours Jaunes*, called *That* by the author, offers little help to those seeking a thematic unity within the group. The title is also that of the first piece in this section. Here the poet frames a negative answer to the questions put to him about his art by his interlocutor. The dialogue is brought to a close by the poet, who

says: "Art does not know me. and I don't know Art."

This should not be interpreted as a declaration of ignorance on the part of an unlettered provincial, Corbière seems to have been sufficiently aware of France's nineteenth century poets to have borrowed from some—Baudelaire in particular—where it suited him, and to castigate others, notably Lamartine and Musset. Rather it might be useful to evoke the idea of an opposition between literature and art on the one hand, and poetry and life on the other. For what Corbière's originality causes his poetry to lose in technical, purely literary value, it causes it gain in vitality and color, relief and strength. If Corbière's poems seem to step outside any framework of definition, so, one is tempted to add, does life.

Corbière lived for some time in Paris, and the first section of his collection contains a sonnet sequence describing the impressions made upon him by the city. The number of writers who contributed to the evolution of the myth of the capital as a tentacular city seizing and devouring its unfortunate victims is legend. Among the names which must be mentioned are Balzac, Eugène Sue, and Charles Baudelaire.

A poem which is on occasion rightly included with the eight Parisian sonnets in the first chapter is entitled "Paris at Night." Certain aspects of the poem recall the *Parisian Tableaux* in Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil*. Like Baudelaire, Corbière evokes sinister scenes and characters and frenetic activity, while sickness and death seem to hover over the poem. Nonetheless, "Paris at Night" and others

like it remain strikingly original. In the metropolis, the Breton is reminded of home, of the sea he knew well; the comparison of the city to the sea is strange, but not forced:

It's the sea,—a flat calm.—And the
great tide
With a far-off roar has withdrawn. . . .

Even where he moves from general description to closer perspectives, Corbière's sustained use of maritime imagery remains peculiarly appropriate:

The waves will soon come rumbling
back in.
Can you hear the crabs scratching about
in the dark?

"Paris at Night" illustrates some of the finer aspects of Corbière's technique. As is the case in many other poems, the imagery here is powerful, even shocking. There is, moreover, an element of deliberate ambiguity which leaves questions begging an answer in the reader's mind. Above all, the poem becomes for the reader a form of adventure on which he embarks with the poet; he is involved in the discovery of a world which unfolds before him, though not completely. Comparisons could validly be made with certain of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, or even with pieces by Apollinaire.

Whenever Corbière's name is mentioned, it seems to be linked with his use of irony. Its purposes and forms seem to be manifold in *Les Amours Jaunes*. If it is frequently corrosive and negative or even simply facetious, it is also occasionally used with serious intent to goad the reader into revising his opinions, or into thinking deeply.

Often the prime target of the poet's irony is himself. He will use it to prevent himself from falling into a fixed pose or attitude or identity. One example is his description of his situation in Paris.

Five-hundred-thousandth Prometheus
Chained to the rock of painted cardboard.

Corbière is equally capable of using irony to show up the posturing of others. Often, too, it seems to take the form of a defense reaction; the poet, in the teeth of adversity, rather than give way to a hysterical lamentation, manages to raise a smile.

Irony generally implies the presentation of two points of view or more, the offering of landmarks, as it were, from which the reader may himself establish proper perspective. Corbière's approaches to irony are numerous, but closely related to one another. At the most basic level, he makes considerable use of puns and play on words. In many places, he will closely intertwine the sublime with the grossly vulgar, or the divine with the familiar. His purpose in each case seems to be to bring the lofty down to a level where it may be more easily viewed.

Les Amours Jaunes is also the title of a section of the poems. The unity of the section is not at first too obvious. However, the poems in it do deal with love and woman, albeit in a somewhat bizarre and indirect fashion. It would seem unlikely that these strange pieces would ever help win over a coy mistress. This group of poems is uneven, but one or two outstanding ones are to be found, while the section does help shed light on Corbière's technique as a poet.

One of the most effective, trenchant pieces in the *Les Amours Jaunes* is "A Young Man Dying." Corbière seems to put in the mouth of a young poet the question: "to die or not to die?" For he reveals in the young man an alternating appetite for and aversion to life. Corbière scathingly mocks the line of consumptive Romantic poets who seemed to spend their lives setting down their protracted death throes in writing. Avoiding the obvious, as he generally does, Corbière writes:

How many of them have I read die
away.

Corbière's refusal to identify with these poets seems doubly significant when one

recalls his constant ill health and his early death.

Perhaps the most significant of the poems in this section is a long work titled "The Contumacious Poet." It is a description of a poet's taking up residence in an old ruined building, once a convent, in Brittany. The poem involves a characteristic mingling of tones humorous and nostalgic. The poet, for example, after fervently praying that his absent loved one might come to him, and even vividly imagining her to be there, hears a knock at the door of his tumbledown dwelling. He is of course disappointed when he goes to answer:

"Show yourself with a dagger in your heart! . . .

—There's a knock . . . oh! it's someone. . . .

Alas! Yes, it's a rat."

The one section of *Les Amours Jaunes* in which Corbière is truly consistent in form, theme, and mood is titled *Armorica*. The name refers to Brittany. It is obvious that the poet is permeated with the atmosphere and folklore of his native province, and he communicates his feeling for it beautifully. Here there is little of the frenetic pursuit of originality at all costs which detracted from several pieces from other sections.

The first poem of *Armorica* could easily stand as one of the better short Surrealist poems of a later period. It is an irregular sonnet having as its title "Evil Landscape." It succeeds in communicating an intense impression not only of gloom but also of a spectral world from which man seems excluded, or in which he would be an intruder. The starkness of the landscape, captured in Corbière's harsh alliterations, and the whole uncanny atmosphere would surely strike a receptive chord in the heart of any Celt, be he Scot, Breton, or Irishman.

Seamen is probably the most vitally alive, if not the most consistent, of the sections in the *Les Amours Jaunes*. As the title suggests, it deals with the sea,

seamen, and seaports, viewed realistically and sometimes ribaldly, from close up. The finest of these wild, undisciplined pieces is probably "Bitor the Hunchback," the tale of a deformed ship's watchman who on his annual spree ashore heads hotfoot for a brothel, eager to know love, and with money to burn. The pace of the poem is such that it seems to pick up the reader and let him follow hard on Bitor's heels. With Bitor, he sees the interior of the brothel displayed before him: its selection of girls who are paid according to their "tonnage," the sailors of many different nationalities, for each of whom Corbière does a remarkable thumbnail sketch:

Tall Yankees, blind-drunk as always,
Sitting in pairs, shooting at the wall
Their stream of tobacco-juice aiming at
a target,
Always hitting the mark.

From a joyously bawdy atmosphere, however, the mood changes to become frightening. The reader experiences the impression of mounting apprehension as he sees attention being turned to Bitor by all the people in the brothel. Bitor is stripped naked and tossed up and down in a blanket. He is finally badly bruised. Later, Bitor's body turns up in the harbor but the reader is left with no explanation of his death. It might be that Bitor, having known the full pleasures of the flesh, had nothing more to live for.

What was left by the crabs now served
as material
For the jests of the public; and the
street-urchins,
Playing alongside the black water be-
neath the sunny sky
Beat on his hump as you would on a
drum . . .
A burst drum . . .

—That poor body had known love.

Paul Verlaine was one of the first writers in France to comment enthusiastically upon the originality of Tristan Corbière. Since his article first appeared, talents as diverse as Huysmans, Laforgue, André

Breton, Rémy de Gourmont have pointed to the unique qualities of the Breton poet. Nonetheless, Corbière's work has attracted relatively little attention. It is perhaps worth noting that his best critics have themselves been original, creative writers. This fact seems understandable when it is realized that Corbière does not fit neatly into any real literary tradition.

In fact, various critics, in seeking a parallel, have chosen to go as far back as François Villon. Now, at a distance, if similarities are to be sought, the most valuable references might be made not to Corbière's spiritual or literary ancestors, if they exist, but rather to poets who have followed him.

THE POETRY OF COWPER

Author: William Cowper (1731-1800)

Principal published works: *Olney Hymns* (with John Newton), 1779; *Poems*, 1782; *The Task*, 1785

The poetry of William Cowper is notable for its heralding and fostering the transition to a more natural and simple style than that of Alexander Pope and other neoclassical poets. Cowper uses material which is autobiographical, personal, and subjective, and he demonstrates an interest in rural and domestic settings. Although his primary mood is lyrical, he is also a poet of satire which is characterized by good humor and is, consequently, deficient in verve and incisiveness. His sense of man's limitations leads him, unlike the neoclassical poets, to urge a reliance on the plan and mercy of God.

Cowper's poetic contribution to the sentimental movement emphasizes serenity and quietness rather than the emotional turbulence of his personal life. As a young man he suffered fits of depression which developed into suicidal mania, causing him to withdraw for convalescence to a secluded life in the country. He then lived for about two years in Huntingdon in the home of the Reverend Morley Unwin. After Unwin's death in 1767, he moved with Mrs. Unwin and her two children to the village of Olney, where he wrote his best work. At Olney he also came under the influence of John Newton, the evangelical curate there. Cowper became engaged to Mrs. Unwin, but another outbreak of mania in 1773 prevented their marriage. In the years just preceding this illness he had written most

of the sixty-eight hymns which he contributed to Newton's *Olney Hymns*.

At the end of 1779, Newton moved to a London rectory, and for Cowper the most placid years of his adult life ensued. Mrs. Unwin encouraged him to a more serious literary effort than the composition of light, playful verses which had occupied much of his time since his recovery, and during one winter, 1780-1781, he wrote "Progress of Error," "Truth," "Table Talk," and "Expostulation." In February, 1782, these and four other long poems, besides various shorter pieces, appeared in the volume *Poems by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq.* The book was variously evaluated by the literary journals but was warmly praised in a letter from Benjamin Franklin, who was then in France. For the most part, the poems in the volume satirize a society known to a religious recluse mainly by way of report or memory. With a definite theological bias about the corruption of human nature, he makes moral and didactic pronouncements about the "luxury" of his time. Frequently, however, the poems show forceful writing, quiet humor, and fine critical touches, and in "Table Talk" the volume contains the first unmistakable pronouncement of what later became Wordsworth's revolution against elegant form.

The satire in Cowper's "The Progress of Error" is directed against the most no-

ticable vices and foibles of the day. Lord Chesterfield (Petronius), for instance, appears as a corrupter of youth. The "quavering and semi-quavering" Occidius apparently is not Charles Wesley, as has been supposed, but a clergyman of a parish not far from Olney. And the "cassocked horseman" apparently represents the Reverend Robert Pomfret, of Emberton, who was addicted to fox hunting.

The poem "Truth," the second in order of composition, attacks not only pride but also intelligence and goes beyond a plea for humility to call for abject self-contempt. Declaring man "Sinful and weak, in every sense a wretch," Cowper views learning and wit as snares and completely discounts Voltaire's respect for truth and humanity as compared to an elderly cottager's knowledge of "her Bible true." He wrote:

Not many wise, rich, noble, or profound
In science, win one inch of heavenly ground.

Although his attack on self-conceited, narrow rationalism and his exaltation of the integrity of the poor above the affection of the rich are precursors of the truth later emphasized by Wordsworth, Cowper stresses not a Wordsworthian freedom but a direful penal threat. But the true foretaste of a Wordsworthian view first became evident in Cowper's next poem, "Table Talk." He asserts that, "with a sanction as severe/As vengeance can inflict, or sinners fear," Jehovah guards his "perfect rule." Then, unconvincingly, he declares that the Scriptures "shall teach you: read, believe, and live!" The quality of the verse in this poem merely increases the reader's doubt of the sincerity of Cowper's belief in the "religious truth" dominating it.

There is evidence of Cowper's rising spirits in "Table Talk," the poem written next. The poet himself wrote:

I send you "Table Talk." It is a medley of many things, some that may

be useful and some that, for aught I know, may be very diverting. I am merry that I may decoy people into my company, and grave that they may be better for it. Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that disguise procures me to drop a word in favour of religion.

The poem says at least as much about the art of poetry as about the law of God, and the poet even calls upon Liberty in a manner not beneath comparison to that of a later Romantic:

Place me where Winter breathes his keenest air,
And I will sing, if Liberty be there;
And I will sing at Liberty's dear feet
In Afric's torrid clime, or India's fiercest heat.

The more impassioned style is promoted by the dialogue form of the poem. With "A" always around urging a discipline to prevent anarchy caused by "Freedom, grown freakish," why should not "B" extravagantly praise Liberty? This is not to say, however, that the whole poem is written on a level of tame moderation; against the conventionalized diction and sentiment of Augustan verse, Cowper lashes out with the eloquence of high personal conviction. The virtue which Cowper demands of poetry is not a religious or a social bigotry but a creative strength and integrity. Quite unlike the earlier poem "Truth," his "Table Talk" views Christ as a poet because he was ideally creative, and not because he was edifying. Also, because Religion has generally demanded edification of its poets, it "has so seldom found/A skilful guide into poetic ground." Yet Cowper also included passages which called upon poets to extol Orthodoxy's God or to preach morality.

The next poem, "Expostulation," summarizes the history of the Jews, giving an account of their abuse and of their miraculous preservation. This history is compared to that of the English nation, and both gratitude and reform are urged.

Other poems in the volume, such as "Hope" and "Charity," are also expositions of the liberty represented by Nature, but invariably marred by assertions of limiting, orthodox Evangelicism. However, in the later poems, "Conversation" and "Retirement," there is evidence of a humor which signals Cowper's eventual liberation from the fundamentalism of the Reverend John Newton.

These poems, with more than a score of occasional pieces, were published in March, 1782. The diction was Cowper's

own, even though it was often as conventional as the religious views which it expressed. The unreality of the substance in these poems is attributable largely to his frequently declaiming a faith and morality which neither in literature nor in life could rouse his creative powers to their potentiality. Although Cowper claimed that the volume was "at bottom a religious business," it seems far more "a summary of such truths" as Newton thought it proper to enforce than a transcript of Cowper's own experience.

THE POETRY OF CRASHAW

Author: Richard Crashaw (c. 1612-1649)

Principal published works: *Steps to the Temple*, 1646; *Carmen Deo Nostro*, 1652

The highly emotional, ornate, baroque style that characterized the painting, sculpture, and some of the poetry of seventeenth century France and Italy had little influence on most English creative artists, but the poet Richard Crashaw was a notable exception. Writing about the same time that Suckling, Lovelace, and Carew were celebrating the beauty of ladies of the court in light, polished, witty verses, Crashaw attempted to express in his poetry his impression of the glories of the Christian faith. Unlike the religious poems of Donne and Herbert, which give intellectual, highly personal accounts of the poets' struggles for faith in language and rhythms close to ordinary speech, Crashaw's works are generally diffuse, impassioned reflections on the life of Christ and the symbols of the Christian church. Whatever problems he may have encountered in moving from the Puritan faith of his clergyman father to the Roman Catholicism he adopted near the end of his life are subordinated to the almost mystical fervor of his devotional spirit.

The dominant tone of Crashaw's poetry is rhapsodic; he makes frequent use of hyperbole, personification, and direct address to sustain his high emotional pitch.

Typical are the opening lines of his version of the Twenty-Third Psalm:

Happy me! o happy sheep!
Whom my God vouchsafes to keep;
Even my God, even he it is
That points me to these ways of bliss;

Still more ecstatic is the hymn "To the Name above Every Name, the Name of Jesus," in which the poet calls on his soul to unite the whole universe in singing the praises of Christ:

I sing the Name which None can say
But touch't with an interiour Ray:
The Name of our New Peace; our
Good:
Our Bliss: and Supernaturall Blood:
The Name of All our Lives and Loves.

One of Crashaw's most powerful methods of conveying the intensity of his religious feeling is his use of erotic language, a device he may have learned from Donne. Near the end of "The Flaming Heart," written, the poet explains, "upon the book and picture of the seraphical Saint Teresa," Crashaw addresses the saint, begging her to break into his heart "and take away from me myself and sin":

O thou undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dower of Lights and Fires;

By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
 By all thy lives and deaths of love;
 By thy large draughts of intellectual
 day,
 And by thy thirsts of love more large
 than they;
 By all thy brim-filled Bowls of fierce
 desire;
 By thy last Morning's draught of liquid
 fire;
 By the full kingdom of that final kiss
 That seiz'd thy parting Soul, and seal'd
 thee his . . .
 By all of Him we have in Thee;
 Leave nothing of my Self in me.

Even more striking for its use of the vocabulary of romance is the hymn "In the Glorious Assumption of our Blessed Lady," where the Holy Spirit calls Mary to Him:

Hark, how the dear immortal dove
 Sighs to his silver mate rise up, my love!
 Rise up, my fair, my spotless one!
 The winter's past, the rain is gone.
 The spring is come, the flowers appear
 No sweets, but thou, are wanting here.

Certain words and images occur again and again in Crashaw's works. He seems to have been almost obsessed with blood, tears, milk, gold, silver, pearls, diamonds, and stars, and he forms surprising associations between images that seem on the surface quite dissimilar. In one of his most famous and most extravagant poems, "The Weeper," he addresses the tears of Mary Magdalene:

Upwards thou dost weep;
 Heaven's bosom drinks the gentle
 stream.
 Where th' milky rivers creep,
 Thine floates above; and is the
 cream.

Waters above the Heavens, what they
 be,
 We're taught best by thy Tears and
 thee.

Through the thirty-odd stanzas of the poem these tears are described as the proudest pearls of Sorrow, Angels' wine, golden streams, and fair floods; Crashaw's

flow of images was apparently inexhaustible, but it occasionally betrayed him into verses which move across the line separating the sublime from the ludicrous, as when he calls Mary's eyes "two walking baths; two weeping motions; portable, and compendious oceans."

The spilling of Christ's blood at the Crucifixion inspired a number of similar strange, paradoxical images, some successful, some less so. Crashaw's fondness for developing one conceit out of another, and the tortuous routes his imagination sometimes took, can be seen particularly clearly in "On the Wounds of our crucified Lord," a poem which is typical of certain aspects of his style, though it is by no means one of his better works:

O these wakeful wounds of thine!
 Are they Mouthes? or are they eyes?
 Be they Mouthes, or be they eyne,
 Each bleeding part some one supplies.

Lo! a mouth, whose full-bloom'd lips
 At too dear a rate are roses.
 Lo! a blood-shot eye! that weeps
 And many a cruel tear discloses.

O thou that on this foot hast laid
 Many a kiss, and many a Tear,
 Now thou shalt have all repaid,
 Whatsoe'er thy charges were.

This foot hath got a Mouth and lips,
 To pay the sweet sum of thy kisses;
 To pay thy Tears, an Eye that weeps
 In stead of Tears such Gems as this
 is.

The difference only this appears,
 (Nor can the change offend)
 The debt is paid in Ruby-Tears,
 Which thou in Pearls didst lend.

Crashaw was generally more successful when he restrained his fondness for unusual images and comparisons, and he wrote several works that are appealing in their relative simplicity—even though his poetry could never be called completely unadorned. In the "Hymne of the Nativity, sung by the Shepherdes," the poet seems to have been striving for the inno-

cent, childlike quality of medieval verses on the same subject:

We saw thee in thy Balmy Nest,
Bright Dawn of our Eternal Day;
We saw thine Eyes break from the East,
And chase the trembling shades
away:
We saw thee (and we blessed the
sight)
We saw thee by thine own sweet Light.

I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow
Come hovering o'er the places head,
Offring their whitest sheets of snow,
To furnish the fair Infants Bed.
Forbear (said I) be not too bold,
Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold.

Even in this poem Crashaw could not resist bringing in his favorite images:

Welcome, though not to Gold, nor Silk,
To more than Caesar's Birthright is.
Two sister-Seas of virgins Milk,
With many a rarely-temper'd kiss,
That breathes at once both Maid and
Mother,
Warms in the one, cools in the other.

The longest work in Crashaw's first major volume of poetry, *Steps to the Temple*, published in 1646, is the *Sospetto d'Herode*, a translation of the first book of an epic poem on the Massacre of the Innocents by the Italian baroque poet, Marino. The narrative opens in Hell, where Satan ponders the coming birth of Christ and plots against God. Crashaw seems to have modeled his description of the devil on the monsters of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*:

His flaming Eyes dire exhalation,
Unto a dreadful pile gives fiery Breath;
Whose unconsum'd consumption preys
upon
The never-dying Life, of a long Death.
In this sad House of slow Destruction,
(His shop of flames) he frys himself,
beneath
A mass of woes, his Teeth for Torment gnash,
While his steel sides sound with his
Tail's strong lash.

Some passages of this poem are interesting as forerunners of the opening books of *Paradise Lost*, and they reveal in Crashaw an unexpected control of language and dialogue that some of his more extravagant lyrics would not suggest:

He has my Heaven (what would he
more?) whose bright
And radiant Scepter this bold hand
should beare.
And for the never-fading fields of Light
My fair Inheritance, he confines me
here,
To this dark House of shades, horror,
and Night,
To draw a long-liv'd Death, where all
my cheer
Is the solemnity my sorrow wears,
That Mankind's Torment waits upon
my Tears.

One of the Furies is sent up from hell to enlist the help of King Herod in Satan's battle against man, and the book ends with her exhortation to the king, a call to violence strongly reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's plea for Duncan's murder:

Where art thou man? What cowardly
mistake
Of thy great self, hath stolen King
Herod from thee?
O call thyself home to thy self, wake,
wake,
And fence the hanging sword Heaven
throws upon thee.
Redeem a worthy wrath, rouse thee,
and shake
Thy self into a shape that may become
thee.
Be Herod, and thou shalt not miss
from me
Immortal stings to thy great thoughts,
and thee.

Crashaw published with the *Steps to the Temple* a collection of nonreligious poetry which he called "The Delights of the Muses." These poems reveal a number of new facets of his talents. One of the best of all his works is "Music's Duel," a poem particularly remarkable for the skill with which the poet has manipulated his rhythm and diction to cre-

ate the most musical effect possible. The poem describes a contest between a lute player and a nightingale; the bird perishes as she tries to equal the beauty of the notes that flow from the instrument. Crashaw captures many moods and tones as he describes the various songs of the lute and the bird. At one point the instrument strikes a martial note:

. . . as when the Trumpets call
Hot Mars to th' Harvest, of Death's
field, and woo
Men's hearts into their hands; this
lesson, too,
She gives him back; her supple Breast
thrills out
Sharp Airs, and staggers in a warbling
doubt
Of dallying sweetness.

The poem concludes with a charming brief epitaph for the nightingale:

She dies; and leaves her life the Victor's
prize,
Falling upon his Lute; o fit to have
(That liv'd so sweetly) dead, so sweet
a Grave!

This volume included a number of other poems in genres popular at the time: elegies on friends and acquaintances from the university; a panegyric on the birth of the king's second son, the Duke of York; witty, brief epigrams; and even a Cavalier love lyric, the "Wishes to his supposed Mistress." The short stanza form and the clarity of the diction of this latter poem make it one of Crashaw's most appealing, though his catalogue of those beauties he desires for his mistress is unquestionably too long. The poem begins:

Who ere she be,
That not impossible she
That shall command my heart and me;

Where ere she lie,
Lock't up from mortal Eye,
In shady leaves of Destiny:

Till that ripe Birth
Of studied fate stand forth,

And teach her fair steps to our
Earth . . .

Meet you her my wishes,
Bespeak her to my blisses,
And be ye call'd my absent kisses.

Crashaw's later poems, many of them dealing with the rituals of the Roman Catholic Church, appeared in the *Carmen Deo Nostro*, published in 1652, three years after the death of the poet. This volume also included revisions of many of the earlier religious poems. In most cases the later works are better, more restrained, less filled with bizarre images than their predecessors, as a comparison of the poem on Christ's wounds with these lines from "Sancta Maria Dolorum," addressed to the Virgin as she stands at the foot of the cross, will show:

What kind of marble then
Is that cold man
Who can look on and see,
Nor keep such noble sorrows company?
Sure even from you
(My flints) some drops are due
To see so many unkind swords contest
So fast for one soft Breast.
While with a faithful, mutual, flood
Her eyes bleed Tears, his wounds weep
Blood.

Crashaw did not change his poetic style radically or abandon his favorite images, but he did, in many cases, gain greater control of them.

The often-praised "Hymn to Saint Teresa," written when Crashaw was still a Protestant and published in its final form in the *Carmen Deo Nostro*, shows surprising strength in its opening lines:

Love, thou art Absolute sole lord
Of Life and Death. To prove the word,
We'll now appeal to none of all
Those thy old Soldiers, Great and tall,
Ripe Men of Martyrdom, . . .
Spare blood and sweat;
And see him [Christ] take a private
seat,
Making his mansion in the mild
And milky soul of a soft child.

The poem as a whole is a meditation upon the innocence, the virtue, and the devotion of the child saint and the inspiration she has given to men.

While Crashaw's extravagant, often overblown imagery and the ecstatic tone of much of his poetry has little appeal for many modern readers, his work will continue to be of interest to others, both for

the technical skill it reveals and for the quality of the author's imagination. No other English poet has depicted life and faith in the terms in which Crashaw saw them, and his work gives valuable insight into that baroque spirit which played an important part in seventeenth century culture.

THE POETRY OF CUMMINGS

Author: E. E. Cummings (1894-1962)

First published: *Tulips and Chimneys*, 1923; *G*, 1925; *XLI Poems*, 1925; *is* 5, 1926; *W*, 1931; *No Thanks*, 1933; *1/20 Poems*, 1936; *50 Poems*, 1940; *1 x 1*, 1944; *XAIPE*, 1950; *Poems: 1923-1954*, 1954; *95 Poems*, 1958; *73 Poems*, 1963

Perhaps only Dylan Thomas, of twentieth century poets, has had the impact upon youth which has been E. E. Cummings'. There is scarcely a single American college student today who has not read and often even memorized at least one poem by Cummings, and this outside class, on his own, with a sense of immediacy and identification bordering on ownership. This kinship with youth is no surprise, for even his last poems, the work of a man nearing seventy, celebrate the here and now of being, the eternal present in which limitless future pivots to limited past. It is this moment of aliveness and pure being that youth experiences most fully without regard to the relentless flow of time, and it is that experience which Cummings believed to be living, the only moment of truth.

What is the present, and living fully requires that one expand to fill the moment, to experience it spiritually as well as physically. Cummings was a Romantic and a Transcendentalist, and he felt that the truth that is always here can only be found by love.

E. E. Cummings gave himself in his poetry fully to the life of the now and the love that gives that life its meaning. His thinking is certainly not new; it is as old as thought itself. Poetry is, however, an art of making new, of giving new life to the ideas that have always been, the

eternal verities; and Cummings set out to refresh his Romantic ideas, to make love itself all new anew. His verbal pyrotechnics and typographical eccentricities are products and tools of that quest. By making language look new on the page, he forces his reader to engage the poem at a new level of concentration and, hopefully, to follow that engagement through to the moment of living which Cummings tried to catch up in the poem.

For example, the first poem in *95 Poems* is a definition of loneliness. Its devices are one metaphor, loneliness as a falling leaf; use of the similarity of the letter *l* to the numeral 1; use of the *one* in *loneliness*; a typographical pattern emphasizing the long, narrow numeral 1 and the lone fall of a leaf; and a final definition of loneliness as *l-ness*. That is all, and yet it does make a simple metaphor into a small poem and it does demand the reader's involvement in that metaphor, if only to puzzle it out. It is a poem to be read silently on the page, a poem for the eye, but Cummings wrote most of his poems for the ear as well. The cool elegance of the opening of "All in green went my love riding" is an example of this smooth ballad style.

But he often went to the other extreme, to the almost unintelligible language of the streets, to the poetry of the very common man, as in the poem "oil tel

duh woil doi sez," in the volume titled *W* (pronounced ViVa).

He also changed the language itself, using parts of speech in unexpected ways, forcing verbs to work as nouns, making new words grow from the everyday words of the language. The poem "so isn't so small one littlest why," in *l x l*, for example, is cryptic only until the parts of speech shed their usual functions and take up new ones.

This technique is tricky like that of so much of the "experimental" poetry of the 1920's. But of all the experimenters of those years, only Cummings found a radically new technical approach which was appropriate to his ideas; only Cummings and William Carlos Williams matched new form to content and wed matter to manner so thoroughly and well.

The bold technique gave him notoriety and finally fame, but he was not a poet without content, a poet of hollow surfaces. His Romanticism led him on a quest for the truth that shines in the moment but is eternal beyond it, and, like a true Romantic, he scorned those who lived in the material world as if it were the final end of things. He scorned the political world which he saw as a breeding place for greed and violence. In a poem in *l x l*, he defined a politician as an ass that only man did not ride, and in "THANKSGIVING (1956)," he was overcome by revulsion at America's role in the Hungarian uprising. The violence of that poem reflects the hate which is so much a part of the Romantic mind, a hate for the betrayal of an idea and an ideal by practical necessity, of the eternal by the temporal.

Cummings wrote many good political poems, witty and sharply critical of a society which he felt had betrayed its own ideals and its true nature so very often. There are "i sing of Olaf glad and big," "as freedom is a breakfastfood," and "it was a goodly co," and there is "pity this busy monster, manunkind," in which "Progress" is a disease giving comfort to its victims and the only hope seems to lie

in leaving the whole mess behind.

There are those poems and the many comic poems about people who fail to live fully and whose spirits are dead, like "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls" and "nobody loses all of the time." But the real variety and wonder of Cummings' talent is most clearly figured in his love poetry, the body of poems in which he makes love itself new in the freshness of his eye and voice. Only Robert Graves and Theodore Roethke in the twentieth century have written love poetry with the skill and artistry of Cummings, perhaps because only those three poets had the personal exuberance and vision to celebrate both love of the flesh and of the spirit in a fashionably existential and disillusioned age. His love sonnets are as delicate, controlled, and genuinely lyrical and loving as any in the language. No puritan, he celebrated at times the honest joy of lust, of purely physical love which achieves the spiritual by making no hypocritical pretense of having it.

There are also love poems of another nature, such as the love poem to his father, "my father moved through dooms of love," or the many loving poems about simple people like "dominic has" in *95 Poems*. These are love poems to man, capable of so much love and so much pain; they celebrate the love which has its most intense and moving expression in "Jehovah buried, Satan dead."

The spirit of love and the spirit of man, interwound pure and whole but forever grounded in the world of hate and fear, define Cummings' vision, which is a vision worthy of any true poet.

Like most poets, Cummings had his weaknesses. There are many poems which have become merely cute with the passage of the years, and often he is sentimental rather than tender, nasty rather than angry in spirit. But he did capture a young vision of life as a truly vital and growing experience. If we outgrow that view of things, we will have outgrown youth and much of life itself. If E. E. Cummings never gave us a poem of the

magnitude of *Four Quartets* or *Paterson*, he did give us lyrics which are truly lyrical, love poems which are truly loving, and poems of the living moment which are truly lively and alive. He taught us

new ways of using words and made us see the old ways anew. He was an honest and passionate poet, and his poems celebrate the honesty of passion and the often painful world redeemed by love.

THE POETRY OF DANIEL

Author: Samuel Daniel (c. 1563-1619)

Principal published works: *Delia*, 1592; *Complaint of Rosamond*, 1592; *The First Fowre*

Books of the civile warres, 1595, enlarged in 1599 and 1601; *Poeticall Essayes*, 1599

Samuel Daniel's career as a poet spanned the last decade of the reign of Elizabeth I and the first fifteen years of that of her successor, James I; and his works reflect aspects of the prevailing literary climate of both courts. The early poems, including *Delia*, a sonnet sequence, and the *Complaint of Rosamond*, both written while Daniel was living at Wilton as tutor to the son of the Countess of Pembroke, the sister of Sir Philip Sidney, are modeled on the works of his English predecessors, men steeped in the Renaissance tradition as well as in the medieval writings of their own country. Several later works, reflective philosophical poems, reveal the more academic side of Daniel's interests and suggest his readings in the classics, especially in the works of Horace. His lyrics, masques, and pastoral plays were inspired by the tastes of King James and Queen Anne and their court.

Daniel's sonnets, first published in an authorized edition in 1592, lack the intellectual brilliance and complexity of Shakespeare's and Donne's works in the same genre, but as pure lyrics they are worthy successors to Sidney's sequence, *Astrophel and Stella*, which undoubtedly served as their model. Daniel commends his ideal lady in terms that are no less effective for being rather conventional:

Fair is my Love, and cruel as she's fair:
Her brow shades frowns, although
her eyes are sunny;
Her smiles are lightning, though her
pride despair,

And her disdains are gall, her favours
honey.

Another fine sonnet begins:

Look, *Delia*, how w' esteem the half-
blown rose,
The image of thy blush and summer's honour,
Whilst yet her tender bud doth un-
disclose
That full of beauty, Time bestows upon
her.

As a sequence Daniel's work has less plot than Sidney's. In the latter can be traced at least the shadows of a love affair, real or imaginary. Daniel, however, was content to create variations on themes made popular by the Italian sonneteers: the transience of earthly beauty and the desirability of yielding to love while one still possesses it, the immortality that poetry can confer, the laments of the rejected lover. He links one group of sonnets within the sequence by beginning each poem with a modification of the last line of the preceding one, a device which is clever and effective.

The *Complaint of Rosamond* is one of a long line of poems written in imitation of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, a collection of verse tales relating the fall of princes and noblemen, written by a number of mid-sixteenth century poets, published first in 1559 and reissued with additions several times in the next twenty-five years. The vast majority of poems of this type were mediocre, lugubrious, excessively didactic efforts, but Daniel suc-

ceeds remarkably well in lifting his poem above the standard set in the *Mirror*, though the *Complaint* inevitably retains some of the faults of the genre, notably in its sometimes excessive moralizing. The seven-line stanza occasionally encouraged the poet to unnecessary verbosity, and almost inevitably passages of fine poetry are mingled with dull verse. The poem relates the story of the mistress of Henry II, a beautiful young woman who was poisoned by her lover's queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Rosamond appears to the poet in a vision, expecting sympathy from the lover of Delia, and she instructs him to retell the tale of her temptation, submission, and unhappy end, that "Lovers' sighes on earth" may carry her soul into the Elysian fields. Rosamond's character is appealingly presented, and Daniel evokes the reader's sympathy for her weakness:

For whilst the sunn-shine of my fortune
lasted,

I joy'd the happiest warmth, the sweet-
est heat

That ever yet imperious beautie tasted,
I had what glory ever flesh could get:
But this faire morning had a shamefull
set;

Disgrace darkt honor, sinne did
clowd my brow,

As note the sequel, and I'll tell thee
how.

The *Complaint of Rosamond* was followed by "A Letter sent from Octavia to her Husband Marcus Antonius into Egypt," a work in the tradition of Ovid's *Heroides*. The aggrieved Roman matron protests the injuries she has suffered from her faithless husband. She promises to remain true to him, isolated from the gossiping tongues of society, and finally pleads for his return, telling of dreams that prophesy disaster for him if he remains with Cleopatra. The poem has considerable dramatic appeal, though it is, perhaps, too long.

Possibly the most remarkable, if not the most distinguished of Daniel's poems is *The First Fowre Bookes of the*

civile warres, a verse history of the Wars of the Roses, written, like the *Complaint*, in rhyme royal. Daniel drew heavily upon the chronicles for his narrative, beginning with a brief survey of English monarchs from the time of William the Conqueror and treating in detail the years from the accession of Richard II to the imprisonment of Henry VI in the tower of London and the marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville; the work was never really completed.

The rather unpromising subject matter did not entirely submerge Daniel's poetic talents; when he draws himself away from the recounting of events and focusses on individuals he can create moving scenes. Critics have praised, in particular, the passage in which he describes Richard II's queen as she watches Henry Bolingbroke's triumphal procession into London. Much as Daniel may, as a poet, have desired to improvise, he was a conscientious historian, and he held himself closely to his sources, giving himself only sufficient latitude to re-create speeches, a practice acceptable even among great classical historians like Thucydides and Tacitus, and to reflect occasionally on the moral and philosophical implications of the actions he described.

At the end of the reign of Elizabeth, Daniel composed what seem to many readers his finest poems, the epistles to Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, and to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and *Musophilus*, his dialogue on the virtues of the active and of the contemplative life. All of these works reveal Daniel's stoical bent and his vision of an ideal state in which man can remove himself from the turmoil of the world and stand above it, observing the frailty of the human race. He writes, in the poem to the Countess of Cumberland:

He that of such a height hath built his
minde,

And reard the dwelling of his thoughts
so strong

As neither Feare nor Hope can shake
the frame
Of his resolved powres, nor al winde
Of Vanitie or Malice, pierce to wrong
His settled peace, or to disturbe the
same,
What a faire seate hath he from
whence hee may
The boundlesse wastes, and wieldes of
man survey.

And with how free an eye doth he
looke downe
Upon these lower Regions of turmoyle,
Where all these stormes of passions
mainly beate
On flesh and blood, where honor,
power, renowne
Are onely gay afflictions, golden toyle.

Man must feel pity for the afflictions of
others, but he must also accept them as
inevitable. The heart of man is to be like
Eliot's "still point of the turning world":

Knowing the heart of man is set to be
The centre of his world, about the
which
These revolutions of disturbances
Still roule, where all th' aspects of
miserie
Predominate, whose strong effects are
such
As he must beare being powrelesse to
redresse;
And that unless above himselfe he can
Erect himselfe, how poore a thing is
man?

In the poem to the Countess of Bedford, one of the noblewomen whose patronage contributed much to Daniel's success at the court of James and his queen, the poet writes of virtue which, he suggests, must shine brightest in the nobility. In this work, as in the preceding one, the poet emphasizes his conviction that

Since all the good we have rests in the
mind,
By whose proportions onely we redeeme
Our thoughts from out confusion, and
do finde
The measure of our selves, and of our
powers.

The Epistle to Egerton is a discourse on law and equity. Daniel feels that law has become inflexible, malicious, seeming "to foster, rather than withstand contention." Equity, resting in the Lord Keeper's hand, is "the soule of Law,/ the life of Justice, and the spirite of Right."

Musophilus, published in 1599 with the subtitle "Containing a general defense of all learning," is a considerably longer work than any of the epistles. It is a genuine debate between the man of action, Philocosmus, whose name marks him as the lover of the world, and Musophilus, the disciple of the Muses. Daniel had undoubtedly fought out in his own mind the conflicting claims of art and life; while he obviously chose the side of Musophilus, Philocosmus' arguments are not those of a straw man, easily to be toppled.

Philocosmus in the initial stanza chides the artist for writing in a "profit-seeking" age that makes other demands on men. Seeking fame, the poet will succeed only in making beggars of his family by writing "A multitude of words to small effect, / Which other times may scorn and so deceive / Thy promis'd name of what thou dost expect."

Musophilus defends "the worke of doing well"; man must not live by the "vulgar foote," basing his actions on what the crowd approves. To write poetry is to preserve what is immortal—virtue and knowledge—and, perhaps, to win a kind of personal immortality in the process. He comments about Chaucer:

Yet what a time hath he wrested from
time,
And won upon the mighty waste of
days,
Unto th' immortall honor of our
clime,
That by his meanes came first
adorn'd with Bays.

Philocosmus scorns Musophilus' hope for fame. Does he believe that the "barbarous language" of "this scarce-discerned Ile" can last? Literature is as corrupt as the rest of earthly things:

These strange confused tumults of the
minde,
Are growne to be the sicknes of these
times.

Musophilus humbly acquiesces in many
of his companion's objections, yet he
affirms the position that the artist must
almost inevitably take. Praise and lasting
fame are not essential. Ultimately,

. . . if onely one allow
The care my labouring spirits take in
this,
He is to me a Theatre large enow,
And his applause only sufficient is:
All my respect is bent but to his
brow,
That is my all, and all I am is his.
And if some worthy spirits be pleased
to,
It shall more comfort breed, but not
more will;
But what if none? It cannot yet undo
The love I beare unto this holy skill:
This is the thing that I was borne to
do,
This is my Scene, this part must
fillfill.

The philosophical poems reveal Daniel's mastery of an unadorned style, admirably suited to the clarity of his thought. However, he had another, more poetic voice, shown first in the sonnets, and later in his masques and pastoral plays written for the entertainment of Queen Anne and the court. In this mode, too, Daniel's clarity of diction is one of his finest attributes, as the following verses from *Tethys Festival*, a masque, indicate:

Are they shadowes that we see?
And can shadowes pleasure give?
Pleasures onely shadowes bee
Cast by bodies we conceive,
And are made the things we deeme,
In those figures which they seeme.

But these pleasures vanish fast,
Which by shadowes are exprest:
Pleasures are not, if they last,
In their passing, is their best.

Glory is most bright and gay
In a flash, and so away.

Another fine lyric, "Ulysses and the Syren," is a brief debate between the characters in the title on the subject of pleasure versus honor. The siren tempts the hero with her praise of sensual beauty and freedom from responsibility. Ulysses defends honor, though his adversary calls it an idea "begotten onely to molest / Our peace." The hero is finally triumphant; beauty cannot seduce him, for

the state of things require
These motions of unrest,
And these great Spirits of high desire,
Seeme borne to turne them best.
To purge the mischiefs that increase,
And all good order mar.

The body of Daniel's work shows him to be predominantly a thinker who sometimes wrote in verse, rather than a poetic genius, though a few of his lyrics can stand among the finest of his time. The same dignified voice that can express brilliantly the poet's convictions about the worth of his art can, on occasion, be simply dull, and Daniel seems to have been aware of his short-comings as an artist. Yet they seemed to him of minor importance. His address to the reader, published with *Certain Small Poems* in 1607, shows admirably the perspective from which he wrote:

And would to God that nothing
faulty were
But only that poore accent in my verse
Or that I could all other reckonings
cleere
Wherwith my heart stands charg'd, or
might revers
The errors of my judgement . . .

Though Daniel may never be regarded as one of England's great poets, the scope of his interests makes him one of the most interesting men of letters of his age.

THE POETRY OF DICKEY

Author: James Dickey (1923-)

Principal published works: *Into the Stone*, 1960; *Drowning With Others*, 1962; *Helmets* 1964; *Buckdancer's Choice*, 1965; *James Dickey: Poems 1957-1967*, 1967

James Dickey's first collection of poems, *Into the Stone*, published as a section of *Five Modern Poets VII* in 1960, displays his characteristic strategies with theme, structure, and imagery. As in his later work, the choice controlling the considerable variety of subject matter and lyric qualities lies perceptibly within the personality and experience of the poet himself. The selections are largely impressionistic, exploring the consciousness of the artist and developing perceptions on the basis of particular personal experiences. The situations of most of the poems concern the writer's sensitive responses to crucial experiences, either of boyhood or adulthood, viewed in retrospect. Other poems express the feelings and sensations which develop from reflection on types of experience.

The situations are interesting and significant within themselves, but the power and chief appeal of the poems lie in the poet's treatment of these situations. Although they contain little personal symbolism, the poems develop meaningful patterns of personal sensations which ascertain and appraise inner and outer reality at various depths. Presented usually by accumulative images, these patterns develop out of three attributes of the poetic sensibility: a vivid sense of the emotional shape of experience, the ability to synthesize intuitively the disordered elements of life, and the capacity for empathetic self-projection.

Drowning With Others, his second volume, followed with remarkable consistency a religious pattern centered on the use of various symbols for the Christ. Water is basic: the water where the poet drowns with others, or mankind, while trying to rescue them and himself; and water on which even the fisher of men Himself can no longer walk, but drowns

inside each man who sinks into the depths of the modern world.

The first poem in the book, "The Life-guard," sets the theme. In this poem can be seen Dickey's basic verse pattern, one of conventional stresses in anapests and iambics, which gives the book a metrical consistency and sameness. The poem continues with the poet's exploration of his own defeat and potential death.

"A Birth" is a studio piece, a fanciful still life composed of grass, pasture, a young horse, a child, a mother, and the sun climbing the shoulder of the speaker. Possibly one of Dickey's strengths is his comfort among the academic influences of the past three decades, so that he does not need flagrant rebellions which could disarrange his style. His conventional meters and stanza patterns do not block his invention at all. He writes a comely, even-tempered, careful verse.

In poems such as "The Heaven of Animals" and "Fog Envelops the Animals," he makes parables that suggest a pure world of instinct, softness, death which is natural rather than cruel in the human way, and a strange sense of the soul rising out of its captivity into an animistic region. Like Yeats, he senses the terrible paradox of soul fastened to a dying animal; or, he reverses the Yeatsian emphasis and considers body as suffering from the nails of spirit.

The title piece is not one of the stronger poems in the book. It is a fantasy of identity with the Christ, in which the writer uses remnants of Icarus, Eliot's and Lowell's kingfisher (at least they are the latest to have given the symbol notoriety), and a characteristic Thomas pattern.

"Drowning With Others," on which Dickey staked a great deal, relies ultimately on its assemblage of lazily accepted symbols and obvious derivations. It is

much more heartening to come upon a successful fusion of the secular-personal and the religious-universal in the ending of an excellent poem entitled "The Scratch." In this poem the language is singular; the meters and images carry the experience to a condition of power, vivid and deep.

It is even more rewarding to encounter in this volume one of the most moving poems of this century, "The Hospital Window," a magnificently shaped account of the speaker's visit to a tall glass hospital where his father lies in that area which is death even though he is still alive. Though elegiac, the whole movement of this perfectly controlled poem is triumphant, for the father's hand waving good-bye from a window signifies that both father and son are not afraid for each other; and the son stands in the street outside, looking up, blocking traffic, bringing the entire soulless mechanical world to a halt with the frail force of human love and courage.

In *Helmets*, Dickey goes about his personal myth-making as if it were a pleasant obsession, a gentle compulsion that sometimes lifts his poems to nobility. Myths of the past are not Dickey's concern (he makes one reference to Ulysses, one to Shakespeare's Ariel, several to the Bible); he wants to begin with ideas from his own time, from his own experience, and expressed in his own idiom.

In this third collection man's relationship to animals is the great theme Dickey explores carefully and freshens up brightly for his readers. In poem after poem he intertwines man and beast, not like some later-day Aesop wielding sledgehammer morals, but like the subtle poet he is, one who gently suggests, who lets his reader share in the creation of myth and moral. The parade of animals is fascinating; there are horses, cows, robins, unicorns, oxen, basilisks, trout, deer, sharks, porpoises, rattlesnakes, wild boars—a whole Ark full.

Many poems and stories have been written about hunters who are seized

with a sudden reluctance to kill, but in "Springer Mountain" the poet is aiming at something more than the expression of disgust; his is a mystical, religious reaction.

Not all of the good poems in *Helmets* are about animals, but the myth-making continues. In "Cherrylog Road," perhaps the most striking poem in the book, the poet makes a myth from our own twentieth century materials; for locale he uses the old cars in a junkyard overgrown by weeds. To this junkyard the speaker in the poem comes to meet his girl, Doris Holbrook, who will escape from her father to make love to him there. The poet creates a backdrop for love that is only mildly comic, that is certainly nostalgic in its references to the rumble seat of an Essex, to a Pierce-Arrow, and to an old Ford that had been redesigned to accommodate its bootlegger owners. When the girl finally appears, their affair in the junkyard is for the lovers as intense and romantic as if it had taken place among the ruins of classic Greece.

In general, the poems in *Helmets* are sustained at a high level, but some of them—for instance, "The Beholders," "The Being," and "In the Child's Night"—have an indefinite, hazy quality that leaves the reader with a feeling of mild disinterest.

"Bums, on Waking" is concerned with drunkards who may pass out anywhere (not always in gutters with water running over their legs) and who may be startled by their surroundings when they wake up. After exploring the possibility of their awakening in church, Dickey ends his poem on a religious note far more subtle than that in his story about a folk singer.

Perhaps the most complicated poem in the volume is "Approaching Prayer," in which the speaker tries to say something for his dead father. In the empty house he finds three things of his father's and dresses himself in them: a set of gaffs for a gamecock, a sweater, and a boar's head. Part of the poem is familiar Dickey in

that it is told from the standpoint of the boar as it is attacked by dogs in a creek; the boar kills one dog and in turn is killed by a man's arrow. But the poem is far more complex than a simple account of a boar hunt. Its symbolism is as variegated as anything by Dylan Thomas, and the reader feels at the end that the poet's prayer has been said even if no one listened.

The title of James Dickey's fourth volume, *Buckdancer's Choice*, suggests the nature of this collection of twenty-one poems by its descriptive reference to the improvised dances of itinerant Negro minstrels, the buckdancers of a bygone day. Again the title poem deals with a crucial experience of boyhood. For a silent, awe-inspired boy, it is a song of death as well as of human choice, which brings to his mind a vision of a "buck-and-wing" man, one of the last representatives of a dying art, as he takes his choice in rhythm with the broken song. The frenzied antics of the last buckdancer and a dying mother's song fill the boy with a sense beyond his years of the imminent ultimates of life. To the impressionable boy, himself almost risen to the frenzy of the buck and wing, the scene unites the various representatives of humanity.

"The Firebombing" and "The Escape" are among the most interesting of those poems dealing with the poet's recollection of particular experiences of manhood. In "The Firebombing" the poet relates his experiences as a pilot on a bombing mission over Japan. The mission begins with the unpoetic technicalities of switches and motors. As the planes take off and settle out in the night, however, the poet is seized by the awe-filled beauty of the situation. The poet reconstructs the scene from the planes as they drone over enemy territory. He pictures vividly the burning city seen through the blue night clouds. Running parallel with the aesthetic detachment of the poet as pilot is the more thoughtful, compassionate attitude of the poet at the time of his writing. This atti-

tude is first expressed in an apprehension of the unity and brotherhood of all men, a foundation of sympathy set within the soul of the poet. This sense of the oneness of man torments the glory of the mission throughout the poem and brings it to the concluding sense of the painful alienation man brings upon himself. Though at the time of the mission the poet did not think of his own home, now he sees himself bombing his own little town. Now he can see the bombing from the viewpoint of the occupants of the houses. Regretting his own wartime destruction, the poet realizes that the position of the pilot does not deliver him from his responsibility to humanity.

Fire is the unifying symbol of "The Firebombing." It is the harsh reality of destruction in the doomed city. Moreover, like the moon in much of James Dickey's poetry, fire in this poem takes on the significance of emotive forces and life essences. There is fire attached to everything and the fire-tail of the former enemy separates home from home and makes heavier the regret of the sensitive poet within his own door.

Several other poems, such as "Faces Seen Once" and "The Night Pool," develop from reflections on common human experience. "Faces Seen Once" considers a characteristic of human cognition and memory, namely, our habit of remembering outstanding features of faces we meet through the years and of projecting these features upon future acquaintances. As we grow older, in an attempt to control perception and to organize all sensations, out of many faces one face is organized to represent most truly our sense of unity and oneness. Throughout life our relationship is not with individuals alone but with mankind in everyone. The poem therefore deals with an existential problem, our sense of alienation and our struggle for some concept of oneness.

One attribute of the poet, however, remains to be emphasized, his empathetic self-projection. Several poems demonstrate this attribute, perhaps the most

impressive being "Reincarnation (1)." The poet's peculiar feat here is an interesting control of perspective. Normal human perspective is reduced to that of a snake, whose world is basically prescribed by the circumference of an old wagon wheel. Toward the end of the poem the snake takes on the symbolic significance of evil, the earlier identification of the snake with man becoming disturbingly illuminating. The snake, its head becoming more poisonous and poised minute by minute, waits for man to walk beside the flowing stream.

A perception of the germination and nature of evil is not unusual in the collection of many subjects and perceptions. Most of the poems of *Buckdancer's Choice* develop an organic analysis of crucial moments and conditions of human life. The poet moves freely through time in step with the effect of years upon human experience. Because of his wide and shifting perspectives, James Dickey has achieved in his work fresh and significant insights, expressed with true poetic power.

THE POETRY OF DOWSON

Author: Ernest Christopher Dowson (1867-1900)

Principal published works: *Verses*, 1896; *The Pierrot of the Minute*, 1897; *Decorations*, 1899

If a choice had to be made of the most typical member of the tragic and wasted generation of the "yellow Nineties," that choice would almost inevitably be Ernest Dowson, for in so many ways did his short life fit into what came to be the established pattern of the period. His unhappy love affair with the daughter of a Polish restaurateur, conversion to Roman Catholicism, alcoholism, and early death—all these details, plus the publication of only two small volumes of poems and a verse play, give us, in the career of one man, a portrait of the age. His photograph, taken while he was at Oxford, shows us a shy, limp figure, marked by unusually large eyes that seem fixed in the dreamlike stare of a somnambulist; the drawing by Rothenstein is of a man so dim as to resemble Max Beerbohm's Enoch Soames.

The fantastic decade, variously known as "the yellow Nineties" and "the Beardsly Period," was, above all, the period of the minor poet. After the giants of the Victorian Age had left the scene, there was no one to take their places, and English poetry suffered a sharp decline. By 1895, Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold were dead; Swinburne had been in-

carcerated in Putney under the watchful eye of Watts-Dunton; and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement had spent its force. To be sure, Kipling had, in 1886 and 1892, published his two most famous volumes of poems; but Kipling was the precise opposite of "the poet's poet"; he was, in spite of his great gifts, a popular writer who had no influence on contemporary literature. The really outstanding talent of the period, that of A. E. Housman with his *A Shropshire Lad* of 1896, was not to be widely recognized until many years later. Thus the stage was occupied only by these minor figures: Dowson, John Gray, Francis Thompson, Lionel Johnson, Arthur Symons, who seem in retrospect, as perhaps do the minor poets of any period, to have been conventionally grouped.

A consideration of the work of any of these minor poets always leads to a consideration of the influence upon it of French poetry and particularly that of Paul Verlaine. Two aspects of Verlaine's work are to be noted here. In 1869 he had published his *Fêtes galantes* and in 1874 his *Romances sans paroles*. The first of these was an evocation of the eighteenth century, the formal gardens of

Versailles where, in the twilight of an autumn evening, the Abbés and shepherdesses, Pierrot and Columbine, stroll along the paths between the clipped yews:

Their short vests, silken and bright,
Their long pale silken trains,
Their elegance of delight,
Twine soft blue silken chains.

And the mandolines and they,
Faintlier breathing, swoon
Into the rose and grey
Ecstasy of the moon.

It is the world of brocaded coats and elaborately curled wigs, depicted so superbly by Beardsley in his illustration for Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, that Verlaine sought to reanimate and that Dowson used as the background of his slight verse drama, *The Pierrot of the Minute*, which is a Verlaine poem expanded into a colloquy in rhyming couplets between Pierrot and a Moon Maiden. Quite appropriately, the volume was provided with five illustrations by Beardsley. The scene is laid in the Parc du Petit Trianon, in the twilight, and the opening lines give a fair impression of the style:

My journey's end! This surely is the
glade
Which I was promised: I have well
obeyed!
A clue of lilies I was bid to find,
Where the green alleys most obscurely
wind;
Where tall oaks darkliest canopy o'er-
head,
And moss and violet make the softest
bed. . . .

This passage is reminiscent of Verlaine's "Nuit du Walpurgis Classique" with its delightful description of a garden by Lenôtre: "correct, ridicule et charmant." Dowson knew French well, having traveled much in France, and Verlaine was one of his favorite poets. This little play is obviously intended to be an airy trifle, yet it is suffused with an atmosphere of gentle melancholy, and this is the atmosphere that pervades all of Dowson's work.

Verlaine's *Romances sans paroles*

(*Songs Without Words*) had an even greater influence on the English poetry of the 1890's than did his eighteenth century fantasies. In his famous "Art poétique" he had proclaimed the doctrine of "music before everything" and that of the "nuance," the last fine shade that joins "the dream to the dream and the flute to the horn." In accordance with this theory, he wrote some of his most famous pieces: "La lune blanche," "Il pleure dans mon cœur," for example, in which the subject of the poem is reduced to a minimum, and the verses become quite literally a song without words. Dowson did indeed compose a "Chanson sans paroles," which begins

In the deep violet air,
Not a leaf is stirred;
There is no sound heard
But afar, the rare,
Trilled voice of a bird.

The poem then proceeds in the same manner as do the poems of Verlaine. Further, Dowson translated four of Verlaine's poems. Although he modestly gave them the group title of "After Paul Verlaine," they are excellent translations, so akin were the minds of the two poets. But translating Verlaine was a standard gesture of the period: both Gray and Symonds produced versions of the Frenchman's poems; and Wilde, who copied everyone, imitated him shamelessly.

The Roman Church, aware of the embarrassing death of Anglo-Saxon religious writers in modern times, has sought to include Dowson in its list of Catholic poets. A Roman Catholic he certainly became. How sincere his conversion may have been is, of course impossible to judge because first, there is a vast difference between being a Roman Catholic poet and being merely a Roman Catholic and a poet; second, "aesthetic Catholicism" was an important part of the attitude of the period. Again we recall Enoch Soames, who described himself as a "Catholic diabolist," thereby showing how well Beerbohm had caught the mood of the

period. Johnson and Gray were both converts, the latter eventually entering the priesthood; even Wilde died in the arms of the Church. And had not Verlaine, as a result of his prison experience, returned to the faith, to write a series of humble yet beautiful religious poems? Since the poets of this period sought to turn their backs upon the contemporary world, since the doctrine of "art for art's sake" was supreme, quite naturally the Roman Church, with its vast antiquity, its continuity from the Middle Ages, its elaborate ritual, exercised an enormous appeal. Dowson, in his few religious poems, is the perfect example of the "aesthetic Catholic." He did not write of an overwhelming religious experience, as did Francis Thompson in "The Hound of Heaven," the one really great religious poem of this period; in such verses as "Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration," "Benedictio Domini," and "Carthusians," he was haunted by the withdrawn peace of the religious life, its remoteness from the "voice of London, inarticulate,/ Hoarse and blaspheming." Of the Carthusians he asks:

Through what long heaviness, assayed
in what strange fire,
Have these white monks been
brought into the way of peace,
Despising the world's wisdom and the
world's desire,
Which from the body of this death
bring no release?

This poem forms a natural and interesting contrast with Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," written more than a generation earlier. To Arnold, the Carthusian monks were a relic of an age that was dead, an age that he could wistfully admire but which he could not embrace. To Dowson, these monks represented quietude, an escape from an age that he found intolerable.

But though he sang always in a minor, autumnal key, Dowson wrote at least one

poem which all anthologies of English poetry include: his famous "Cynara," or, to give it the full, sonorous Latin title, the quotation from the author's favorite Horace, "Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae." The gentle melancholy, the haunting refrain, "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion," have made this short poem a permanent part of our literature. The weariness, the satiety that were so much a part of the mood of the 1890's are there; yet somehow the poem rises above being merely a period piece and attains, if certainly not to the first, at least to the second rank of high poetry.

Arthur Symons, the only poet of the 1890's to survive into our own time, makes several telling points in his study of Dowson. He calls him "a child, clamouring for so many things, all impossible." François Coppée had said much the same about Verlaine, describing him as a child whom life had wounded cruelly. But Symons continues with the further shrewd observation that Dowson's experiences in the low-life of London and Paris would have made great poets out of many men—as was true of Villon—but that for Dowson they did very little. "He sang," as Symons points out, "one tune over and over, and no one listened to him." It is, perhaps, this very evenness of tone, this constant air of gentle resignation, that keep him in the background of poetry. In fact, it is this singing of one tune again and again that causes the poetry of the 1890's to pall. For some reason, difficult to understand, no really great poetry came out of these broken and tragic lives. Again we think of Villon and of what he brought from the underworld of Paris and the lodgings of Fat Margot, "within this brothel where we keep our state." The 1890's on the contrary, were the age of the minor poet, "the idle singer of an empty day."

THE POETRY OF DRYDEN

Author: John Dryden (1631-1700)

First published: *Astraea Redux*, 1660; *Annus Mirabilis*, 1667; *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1681; *The Medall*, 1682; *MacFlecknoe*, 1682; *Religio Laici*, 1682; *The Hind and the Panther*, 1687; *Alexander's Feast*, 1697; *Fables Ancient and Modern*, 1700

John Dryden the Restoration poet and critic, has been justly praised as the father of modern English. In spite of the three centuries separating his age from our own, his works in both verse and prose are surprisingly contemporary in his diction and sentence structure. Dryden had an uncanny instinct for avoiding fads and selecting those elements in the language of his day that were to be relatively permanent, and his style exerted a powerful influence on succeeding generations of writers.

Dryden's reputation as a poet rests upon his control of language, his ability to treat widely different subjects with equal skill, and his remarkable gift for expressing complex ideas clearly in verse. His work does not often convey great emotional or imaginative power, and he was generally most successful when he could apply his wit and clarity of expression to someone else's plot. His best knows satire, *Absalom and Achitophel*, is based upon Old Testament history and a contemporary political intrigue; his finest play, *All for Love*, owes much to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. His talents were especially well-suited to the journalistic chronicling of events in works like the *Annus Mirabilis*, an account of the war with the Dutch and of the great fire of London that marked the year 1666, and to translations. His versions of the fables of Chaucer and Boccaccio and of Vergil's *Aeneid* have merited special praise for their smoothness and their fidelity to the original texts.

Dryden is best known for his satirical poetry, which depends for its effect chiefly upon devastating, succinct character sketches and pungent witticisms. Writing without the personal bitterness of the great eighteenth century satirists, Swift

and Pope, Dryden humorously ridicules the corrupt politicians and bad poets of his day. "The Medall" attacks the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Achitophel of *Absalom and Achitophel*, who was involved in a plot to name the Duke of Monmouth, illegitimate son of Charles II, heir to the throne. Dryden based his satire on a medal struck by Shaftesbury's supporters to celebrate his release from the tower of London, comparing the Earl to this commemorative piece:

Never did Art so well with Nature
strive,
Nor ever Idol seem'd so much alive:
So like the Man; so golden to the sight,
So base within, so counterfeit and light.

"MacFlecknoe," an amusing mock heroic poem, is a witty attack upon several minor poets, notably Richard Flecknoe and Thomas Shadwell. Much of the poem's humor is derived from the contrast between the absurd subject, the coronation of a new king of the realm of Nonsense, and the lofty style in which Dryden couches his account of the ceremony. The poem opens with an elevated moral sentiment, then dignifies the old king, Flecknoe, by comparing him to the Emperor Augustus:

All human things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, Monarchs
must obey.
This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd
long;
In Prose and Verse, was own'd, without dispute,
Thro' all the Realms of Nonsense,
absolute.

Dryden punctures the epic elevation of his beginning with the word "nonsense"

in line six, but he gives no indication of awareness that his subject is less significant than that of the *Iliad*, preserving the essentially serious tone of the mock epic.

In describing his hero, Shadwell, Dryden again makes skillful use of the satirical portrait. Flecknoe says:

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender
years:

Shadwell alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make
pretence,

But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Dryden handles the heroic couplet brilliantly for comic effect in the satires, working within the confines of its two lines for pointed criticism and exploiting the humorous potential of rhyme. He achieves a very different result with the same verse form in his two major theological works, the *Religio Laici* (*The Religion of a Layman*), a discussion of his Anglican faith, and *The Hind and the Panther*, an allegorical beast fable written in defense of its doctrines after his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. He places less emphasis on rhyme in these works and often carries his thoughts through several couplets as he deals with such knotty questions as the doctrine of invincible ignorance, the interpretation of scripture, and the power of reason. These are not poems designed for light entertainment, but the clarity and logic with which Dryden presents his arguments are impressive. Many passages, among them these lines from the *Religio Laici*, are worthy of comparison with the philosophical poems of Lucretius and Vergil:

Dim, as the borrow'd beams of Moon
and Stars

To lonely, weary, wand'ring Travellers,
Is Reason to the Soul; and as on high,
Those rolling Fires discover but the
Sky,

Not light us here; So Reason's glim-
mering Ray

Was lent, not to assure our doubtful
way,

But guide us upward to a better Day.
And as those nightly Tapers disappear,
When Day's bright Lord ascends our
Hemisphere;

So pale grows Reason at Religion's
Sight:

So dies, and so dissolves in Supernat-
ural Light.

Outstanding, too, is the rare autobiographical statement from *The Hind and the Panther*:

My thoughtless youth was wing'd with
vain desires,

My manhood, long misled by wand'ring
fires,

Follow'd false lights; and when their
glimpse was gone,

My pride struck out new sparkles of
her own.

Such was I, such by nature still I am,
Be thine the glory, and be mine the
shame.

The Hind and the Panther suffers to a degree from its lack of action; the fable is not developed fully enough to carry the weight of the extended theological disputes between "the milk-white hind, immortal and unchanged," who represents the Church of Rome, and the Anglican panther, "sure the noblest, next the Hind, and fairest creature of the spotted kind." Dryden briefly characterizes the English Protestant sects as the Baptist Boar, the Presbyterian Wolf, the timorous Quaker Hare, and others, but he gives these creatures almost no part in his narrative.

In some respects Dryden was even more gifted as a lyric poet than as a philosophical one; his control of language enabled him to create fine musical effects, and he was a skillful manipulator of tone. Three of his odes have won special praise: "To the Pious Memory of Mistress Anne Kiligrew," "A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day, 1687," and "Alexander's Feast." The first of these, written in the irregular stanzas of the Cowleian ode so popular in the mid-seventeenth century, is an elegy for a talented young woman who is described as a goddess-saint, patroness of poetry

and painting, who could redeem the arts from their current degradation. There is little sense of personal grief in the poem; the dignified classical tribute of these lines is typical of the prevailing tone.

Art she had none, yet wanted none;
For Nature did that Want supply:
So rich in Treasures of her Own,
She might our boasted Stores defy:

Such Noble Vigour did her Verse adorn
That it seem'd borrow'd, where 'twas
only born.

Her Morals, too, were in her Bosom
bred
By great Examples daily fed,

What in the best of Books, her Father's
Life, she read.

Both "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day" and "Alexander's Feast" were written to be sung at the annual celebration honoring the patron saint of music, legendary inventress of the organ, and both show Dryden experimenting with language and rhythm in an attempt to capture the various shades of emotion conveyed by different musical instruments and harmonies. The "Song" opens with a majestic tribute to music, then describes the effects of several instruments:

The Trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms
With shrill Notes of Anger
And mortal Alarms.

The double double double beat
Of the thund'ring Drum
Cries! "Hark! the foes come;
Charge, Charge, 'tis too late to retreat."

The soft complaining Flute
In dying Notes discovers
The Woes of hopeless Lovers,
Whose Dirge is whisper'd by the
Warbling Lute.

Dryden employs the same technique for a more complex effect in "Alexander's Feast," where he shows the court musician, Timotheus, drawing his master, Alexander the Great, to moods of rev-

elry, love, pride, and revenge through his music. The rhythms and sounds in the refrains of each stanza echo the hero's changing emotions:

With ravish'd ears
The Monarch hears,
Assumes the God,
Affects to Nod,
And seems to shake the Spheres.

The Prince, unable to conceal his
Pain,
Gaz'd on the Fair
Who caus'd his Care,
And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and
look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again:
At length, with Love and Wine at once
oppress'd,
The vanquish'd Victor sunk upon her
Breast.

The poem ends with the customary tribute to St. Cecilia, skillfully linked to the preceding stanzas:

At last, Divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the Vocal Frame;
The sweet Enthusiast, from her
Sacred Store,
Enlarg'd the former narrow
Bounds,
And added Length to solemn
Sounds,
With Nature's Mother-Wit, and Arts
unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the Prize,
Or both divide the Crown;
He rais'd a Mortal to the Skies;
She drew an Angel down.

A number of graceful songs, most of them about love, were written to be sung in Dryden's plays. The poet used a great variety of meters and stanza forms, preserving a melodic quality in all of them. These verses, from *Troilus and Cressida*, show the flexibility of Dryden's language:

Can life be a blessing,
Or worth the possessing,
Can life be a blessing if love were
away?
Ah, no! tho' our love all night keep us
waking,

And tho' he torment us with cares all
the day,
Yet he sweetens, he sweetens our pains
in the taking;
There's an hour at the last, there's an
hour to repay.

A famous lyric, from *Tyrannick Love*,
is typical of Dryden's songs in its tinge of
melacholy, its smoothness, and its sim-
plicity of expression:

Ah how sweet it is to love!
Ah how gay is young desire!
And what pleasing pains we prove
When we first approach Love's fire!
Pains of Love be sweeter far
Than all other pleasures are.

Another important group of poems is
Dryden's "occasional verse," written to
commemorate public events and mile-
stones in the lives of his friends. While
some of these poems are as ephemeral as
the activities that inspired them, many
others are among Dryden's best work.
Two, *Astraea Redux*, which celebrated
the return of Charles II to the throne in
1660, and *Annus Mirabilis*, helped to es-
tablish the poet's reputation as a man of
letters. The heroic couplets of *Astraea
Redux* introduce the plight of kingless
England in elaborate mythological terms,
then shift into a less ornate mode as Dry-
den addresses the returning monarch:

And welcome now, great monarch, to
your own;
Behold th'approaching Cliffs of Albion:
It is no longer Motion cheats your view,
As you meet it, the Land approacheth
you.
The Land returns, and in the white it
wears
The marks of Penitence and Sorrow
bears.

Dryden employs a four-line stanza in
Annus Mirabilis for his description of
battle scenes between the English and
the Dutch, his analysis of the causes of
the war, and his account of the great fire
of London. The Duke of York, later
James II, is, as the commander of the
Navy, the major figure in the first part of

the poem; Charles II takes the center of
the stage in the second half, comforting
sufferers as flames engulf his capital city:

No thought can ease them but their
Sovereign's care,
Whose praise th'afflicted as their
comfort sing:
Ev'n those whom want might drive to
just despair,
Think life a blessing under such a
King.

Meantime he sadly suffers in their grief,
Out-weeps an Hermit, and out-prays
a Saint:
All the long night he studies their
relief,
How they may be suppli'd, and he
may want.

While the *Annus Mirabilis* shows
Dryden's skill as a journalist in verse,
many critics feel that the more than three
hundred stanzas of panegyric and patriot-
ism would have benefited from judicious
cutting. A number of shorter occasional
poems have greater appeal in their clarity
and directness. The elegy on the satirist
John Oldham is of special interest both
for its moving opening lines and for what
it reveals of Dryden's sense of his func-
tion as a poet:

Farewell, too little, and too lately
known,
Whom I began to think and call my
own;
For sure our Souls were near allied; and
thine
Cast in the same Poetic mold with
mine.
One common Note on either Lyre did
strike,
And Knaves and Fools we both abhorr'd
alike:
To the same Goal did both our Studies
drive;
The last set out the soonest did arrive.

Dryden seldom surpassed the dignity,
precision, and appropriateness of his fine
brief epigram on Milton:

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.

The first in loftiness of thought surpass'd,
 The next in majesty, in both the last:
 The force of Nature could no farther go;
 To make a third, she join'd the former two.

Dryden was a professional man of letters throughout his maturity, and the whole body of his poetry shows his awareness of his public role. Wide as was the range of his subject matter, it never encompassed the exposure of his deepest personal emotions. He wrote with restraint, urbanity, and good humor, whether he was satirizing political corruption, setting forth the tenets of his faith, or complimenting a friend on a new play. He could and did create passages of striking wit and majestic dignity, but even at his lesser moments he main-

tained a remarkable level of competence. His judgment could not always make his poetry great, but it could prevent serious lapses in taste.

Dryden well deserved the praise bestowed upon him by the eighteenth century critic and poet, Samuel Johnson: "Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our meter, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught to think naturally and express forcibly . . . What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, 'He found it brick, and he left it marble.'"

THE POETRY OF DU BELLAY

Author: Joachim du Bellay (1522-1560)

Principal published works: *L'Olive*, 1549; *Vers Lyriques*, 1549; *Recueil de poésies*, 1549; *La Musagoeomachie*, 1550; *XIII Sonnets de l'honnête amour*, 1552; *Les Antiquités de Rome*, 1558; *Les Regrets*, 1558; *Poemata*, 1558; *Le Poète courtisan*, 1559

In a short life, marked by illness and disappointment, the Angevin nobleman Joachim du Bellay wrote some of the finest elegiac and satiric poetry in the French language. His earliest verses, written before 1546, were poor imitations of Clément Marot. Jacques Peletier du Mans, whom Du Bellay met in 1546, turned him from these sterile efforts to composing odes and sonnets, still in imitation, but now of Latin and Italian models, with a view to enriching the French language and demonstrating its potential.

Du Bellay, Ronsard, and Baïf, pupils of the Hellenist Jean Dorat, inspired by Peletier, had long thought about a renewal of French poetry. Thomas Sebillet, taking Marot and his school as guarantors of a new poetry, published his *Art Poétique* in 1548. Though his definitions were confusing, Sebillet's thesis was essentially the same as that of Du Bellay

and Ronsard, who found themselves doubly frustrated by the theory and the choice of model. Du Bellay had a number of sonnets and odes already written. To publish these without commentary would be to range himself under Sebillet's standard. No short preface, what he wrote grew into *La Défense et Illustration de la langue française*, published in 1549. Apparently the manifesto of the young poets known as the Pléiade, the work was in fact a personal text, though Ronsard and the others had their say in outlining the aims of the group: defense of a potentially great language against the Latinizing traditions of Church, University, and Humanism itself; enrichment through the prudent use of neologisms, archaisms, infinitives and adjectives used as nouns, antonomasia, and other devices; illustration (that is, ennoblement) requiring imitation, then emulation of Antique

literature (already undertaken, if hesitatingly, by Marot). The poet, a priest, might deliberately obscure truths, divinely inspired (hopefully revealed through love, through a synthesis of Christianity and Platonism) but must combine inspiration with hard work. Mythology would enshrine such truths, the "vestiges de rare et antique érudition" thus being more than ornamental. Poetry, inseparable from music, should be "doux" (sweet) in intention, thrilling the soul and senses—but might also be "utile" (didactic). Although all these ideas were expressed in the *Défense*, they represent the thinking of the young poets at the outset of their careers.

With the *Défense*, Du Bellay published *L'Olive*, a kind of "canzoniere" of fifty sonnets, over half of neo-Petrarchan inspiration. Despite its literary inspiration, its frequent Petrarchan antitheses, the world of *L'Olive* is rich and sensuous in its blending of mythological references, impressions of color and sound, nature images, and intellectual subtlety.

Published with *L'Olive* were the *Vers Lyriques* or *Odes*. Here the poet seems to dominate the Horatian inspiration of his work, resulting in a more sincere expression of his thoughts than in *L'Olive*. Typical themes are the rapid flight of time and the fragility of all worldly goods.

The program stated, Du Bellay's activity was tireless. In 1549 he published a *Recueil de poésies*, containing official, mediocre flattery—yet not forgetting his art (the ode *D'écrire en sa langue*). An augmented edition of *L'Olive*, with sixty-five additional sonnets, appeared in 1550. In the additions there is a change of tone. The poet seeks and achieves solace for the loss of his lady in Christianity. At this moment, Petrarchism becomes diluted with a fervent Platonism, of which one may see, in the famous Sonnet 113, a precise statement. The poet is liberated from the problems of time and earthly beauty by the soul's winged ascent to re-experience (reconnaître) the eternal

Idea of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth. A striking example of Du Bellay's syncretism is to be seen in Sonnet 114 of *L'Olive*, where Platonic terms are combined with a text from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There also appeared in 1550 the *Musagnoeomachie* (*Battle of the Muses against Ignorance*). François I, Henri II, great contemporary statesmen, and poets join in the struggle.

If his poetry had won the poet glory and immortality for his patrons, the latter had not responded well. Du Bellay was by now a sick man, and his poetic vein seemed to be drying up. What value might the esteem of posterity have after all? But poetry seems to have had at least a therapeutic function. Having turned to Christianity for support, Du Bellay found a new purpose: to champion Christian morality. Love poetry in the earlier manner was rejected, Petrarchism being an ethical issue involving deliberate falsehood such as exaggeration of one's feelings or inordinate flattery. But love poetry in the Platonic form was acceptable; hence the *XIII Sonnets de l'honnête amour*, a distillation of the researches of Pontus de Tyard, published in 1552, along with a translation of Book Four of the *Aeneid*, and a collection of pieces including the poignant *Complainte du Désespéré*.

In 1553 a new edition of the *Recueil de poésies* appeared containing the humorously satirical ode *A une dame*, in which the postures and clichés of Petrarchan love poetry are rejected in favor of a more human, Gallic, brand of love. Du Bellay mocks too the *topoi* of neo-Platonic love poetry; but he is far from abandoning Platonism and even returns to Petrarchan conceits in the late poems of the *Amours*.

Du Bellay's satiric genius had reached maturity. His voyage to Rome as secretary to his cousin, Cardinal Jean du Bellay provided him with ample material. Spellbound by the pathetic debris of the great city, perhaps inspired by a sonnet of Castiglione, Du Bellay began to write his

torical, philosophical, and gnomic meditations on time, fatality, decadence, and morality in the sonnets of the *Premier livre des Antiquités de Rome*. Both in form and in subject the *Antiquités* represent a transition from the earlier works of literary inspiration to the personal manner of the *Regrets*. Sonnets in decasyllabic verse alternate with those in Alexandrines, the standard form of the *Regrets*. Often closely imitating Horace, Virgil, and Lucan, Du Bellay creates a poetry of eloquence and of striking images, the first in French literature to celebrate the melancholy beauty of ancient ruins and their significance. One myth in particular translates Du Bellay's vision of Rome. It is the *Gigantomachy*, a myth of origins, violent struggle, burial, immobility.

Fascination for Rome soon turned to bitter disillusionment. In an intimate account of daily impressions, fashioned into the sonnets of the *Regrets*, Du Bellay, suffering nostalgia, pitilessly exposes the state of his heart and denounces the intrigues, vices, nonchalant immorality of Roman society, and the Curia. This collection of 191 sonnets contains du Bellay's greatest elegiac and satirical poetry, mature and original. Its purpose, as the poet explained in the exquisite dedicatory *Ode à Jean d'Avanson*, was to ease the sorrow of his exile and by an act of poetic creation, achieve oblivion to misfortune.

Scorning the learned and ornamental manner of *L'Olive*, Du Bellay begins the *Regrets* with a profession of naturalness and simplicity: "Je ne veux feuilleter les exemplaires grecs" he writes, "Je ne veux point chercher l'esprit de l'univers" ("I don't want to leaf through Greek texts, search out the soul of the universe"); rather "Je me contenterai de simplement écrire" ("I'll satisfy myself with writing simply"). Such simplicity, such facility, is misleading, as the poet well knew when he maliciously discouraged would-be imitators of his vigorous, sinewy alexandrines.

What is striking in the *Regrets* is Du

Bellay's gift for noting the gesture, attitude, color, or detail that characterizes a person or a place. Frequent repetition of the verb "voir" (to see) suggests his habit of looking at things, his remarkable faculty for seeing the picturesque detail, often presented by the accumulation of precise technical terms. The theme of a sonnet may be expanded in the last line, often through irony, causing the reader's imagination to yield in silence to the creative impulse it has received. Antithesis, however, is the usual instrument of Du Bellay's wit. It appears as a procedure of composition as well as a device of style. The sonnet itself is an antithetical form, and the subject matter of du Bellay's poetry lends itself to antithetical treatment. Thus in Sonnet 6 he contrasts his past life and poetic manner in the quatrains to his present in the tercets. Du Bellay's refusal to be artificial or erudite functions in fact as an artistic device, as J. C. Lapp has shown in the case of mythological imagery, which, sparingly used, becomes ironic by lending relief to an idea in contrast to the "simple" language of the whole. The great myth that does dominate the poems is, of course, that of the exile: Ulysses or Jason, or both together, as in the famous Sonnet 31.

While confiding personal meditations to his verses ("mes plus sûrs secrétaires"), Du Bellay wrote, as recreation, some forty pieces, highly differing in tone, published as the *Divers Jeux Rustiques*. Among them are the celebrated little ode *D'un vanneur de blé aux vents*; the *Hymne de la surdité* (dedicated to Ronsard, comparing their poetic manner, humorously treating the deafness they shared); a reworking of *A une dame as Contre les pétrarchistes*. The *Poemata*, or Latin poems, were published at this time.

In 1557, Du Bellay returned to France to flattering acclaim but also legal difficulties, which, with increasing illness, embittered his last three years. *Le Poète courtois*, a kind of satirical last will and testament, appeared in 1559. Through his ironic advice to the would-be court

poet on how to succeed—where he had failed—Du Bellay antithetically takes up again the arguments of *La Défense* that the true poet is learned, inspired, an indication that he, Ronsard, and their group had not yet achieved an uncontested victory.

One of Du Bellay's early translators was Edmund Spenser:

It was the time, when rest, soft sliding
downe

From heavens hight into men's heavy
eyes,

In the forgetfulness of sleepe doth
drowne

The carefull thoughts of mortall mis-
eries;

Then did a ghost before mineyes ap-
peare,

On that great rivers banck, that
runnes by Rome;

Which, calling me by name, bad me
to reare

My lookes to heaven, whence all
good gifts do come,

And crying lowd, "Lo! now beholde,"
quoth hee,

"What under this great temple
placed is:

Lo, all is nought but flying vanitee!"

So I, that know this world's incon-
stancies,

Sith onely God surmounts all times
decay,

In God alone my confidence do stay.

I saw a wolfe under a rockie cave

Nourning two whelps; I saw her little
ones

In wanton dalliance the teate to crave,

While she her neck wreath'd from
them for the nones:

I saw her raunge abroad to seeke her
food,

And, roming through the field with
greedie rage,

T' embrew her teeth and clawes with
lukewarm blood

Of the small heards, her thirst for
to asswage:

I saw a thousand huntsmen, which
descended

Downe from the mountaines bordring
Lombardie,

That with an hundred speares her
flank wide rended:

I saw her on the plaine outstretched
lie,

Throwing out thousand throbs in her
owne soyle;

Soone on a tree uphang'd I saw her
spoyle.

Andrew Lang translated "A Sonnet to
Heaven" as follows:

If this our little life is but a day

In the Eternal,—if the years in vain

Toil after hours that never come
again,—

If everything that hath been must de-
cay,

Why dreamest thou of joys that pass
away,

My soul, that my sad body doth re-
strain?

Why of the moment's pleasure art
thou fain?

Nay, thou hast wings,—nay, seek an-
other stay.

There is the joy where to each soul
aspires,

And there the rest that all the world
desires,

And there is love, and peace, and
gracious mirth;

Behold the Very Beauty, whereof now
Thou worshipest the shadow upon
earth.

Du Bellay's miserable end in 1560 must have convinced many poets that the Pléiade's early aim of seeking immortality through one's poetry was somewhat impractical. The judgment of posterity, however, sees Du Bellay as one of France's greatest satiric and lyric poets, second only to Ronsard in his own age, an uncontested master of the sonnet whose work helped to found modern French poetry.

THE POETRY OF EBERHART

Author: Richard Eberhart (1904-)

Principal published works: *A Bravery of Earth*, 1930; *Reading the Spirit*, 1936; *Song and Idea*, 1940; *Poems, New and Selected*, 1944; *Burr Oaks*, 1947; *Selected Poems*, 1951; *Undercliff: Poems 1946-1953*, 1953; *Great Praises*, 1957; *Collected Poems*, 1960; *Collected Verse Plays*, 1962; *The Quarry*, 1964

Richard Eberhart is one of the least easily classified of modern poets. The directness of his statements and forcefulness of his language prevent his being within the realm of the moderns who remain aloof and intricate. His moralistic tendency to explain his allegories removes him from the sophisticated circles of understatement. As many critics have pointed out, Eberhart is a Romantic in an age of anti-Romanticism. He is also a quasi-mystic. He calls himself a relativist, a modern dualist. As a result of his two-sides-to-every-issue stand, much of his poetry seems contradictory; the "truth" of one he denies in another. His almost militantly individualistic use of language has been compared to D. H. Lawrence's. Finally, his philosophic poetry deals with everyday questions which are dramatized in everyday experiences. Thus his "metaphysical" poetry concerns not the heavenly, but the mundane. Yet it is exactly his romantic impulses, his Whitmanesque egocentricity, his apparent inconsistencies, his idiosyncratic language, and the realm from which he draws his poetry which make it difficult to read him without becoming involved.

Eberhart's major theme is death, which he explores both as an active man and as an intellectual. The irreconcilable duality between action and intellect has long been a concern of poets; Eberhart's concern in, for example, "In a Hard Intellectual Light," is neither revolutionary nor overwhelmingly modern in a scientific age.

One of Eberhart's first answers for the active man who seeks escape from mechanization is in nature. Hence much of his poetry, especially relatively early work, is easily Romantic, as is his deification of

the age of innocence recorded in "Recollections of Childhood." Loss of innocence comes, however, with the knowledge of death, and even his most fervently Romantic poems do not escape a persistent questioning about when death will come. Romanticism deserts him completely when he sees man in "Maze." To transcend reality as seen in this poem, Eberhart creates visionary states close to the mystical. The reality which he questions most frequently is death; his visionary poetry, therefore, seeks to transcend death, as in "Imagining How It Would Be To Be Dead." Eberhart is not, however, willing or able to maintain the wholly visionary level; for he feels that it is not human.

Both his romanticism and his mysticism consistently return to a persistent concern with the reality of death and of God. His lyric longing for death is expressed in "Cover Me Over." But in "What If Remembrance?" this mood of longing is deliberately questioned. Again, in "The Groundhog," both lyricism and questioning are rejected when the dead animal reminds the poet of his own mortality and coming decay. Such deliberately polemic statements are not a flaw in Eberhart's philosophy; rather, they illustrate what he means when he says that he tends to philosophize on everything but to arrive at no conclusions. He claims also that he is by nature contemplative, but active.

Perhaps one of his most forceful examinations of the recurrent anguish of a man faced with religious abstractions, is "Reality! Reality! What Is It?" Eberhart comes back again and again to his assertion that there are few things that man can be certain of, but death is

always one of them. Although each individual poem presents only one side of the issue, his attitude about death remains nebulous: sometimes Romantic, sometimes mystical, sometimes protesting its interruption of human joys. He allows his poetry to be inconclusive, so seemingly contradictory, because he finds life contradictory. Furthermore, he believes that poetry is a matter of fleeting, perhaps fragmentary flashes of inspiration, and his poem must capture that moment for the part of truth it contains. The next blinding inspiration will contain a new insight, perhaps contradictory, but nonetheless true. He must, therefore, report that moment and let it speak for itself.

As a craftsman, Eberhart seldom revises because the inspiration has passed and the revision would not be faithful to the original truth. For this reason objection has been raised against the fast-moving fury of some of his poems. Critics regretfully point out that sometimes it seems as though Eberhart loses control and the poem directs or misdirects him. Eberhart would not disagree, but neither would

he object. The uncontrolled poems, whether we approve of them as true works or not, are written as he wants them, agitated by violent speculation and equally violent contemplation.

Many of his most recent poems deal explicitly with poetry. "Winter Kill," for example, is at first a dramatic regretting of the death of a bear, then becomes an allegory on the nature of poetry, its elusiveness, its hold upon the known, its flashing insights into the unknown.

The most conclusive statement that one can make about Eberhart's poetry is that it is inconclusive. He is a personal poet. Therefore much of his poetry seems almost confessional, or at least self-examining. Just as Whitman used himself as an archetypal democratic man, Eberhart uses himself as a representative of modern man in a confused world. Honest readers at whatever literacy level recognize their own questions in Eberhart's poems. Whether or not we always agree, it is not difficult to identify with the only answer he offers: love.

THE POETRY OF EDITH SITWELL

Author: Edith Sitwell (1887-1964)

First published: *Clowns' Houses*, 1918; *The Wooden Pegasus* 1920; *Façade*, 1922; *Bucolic Comedies*, 1923; *The Sleeping Beauty*, 1924; *Troy Park*, 1925; *Elegy on Dead Fashion*, 1926; *Rustic Elegies*, 1927; *Poems Old and New*, 1940; *Street Songs*, 1942; *Green Song and Other Poems*, 1944; *The Song of the Cold*, 1945; *The Shadow of Cain*, 1947; *Poor Man's Music*, 1950; *Gardeners and Astronomers: New Poems*, 1953; *The Collected Poems of Edith Sitwell*, 1954

Notoriety was achieved by Edith Sitwell instantly when she and her brothers, Osbert and Sacheverell, burst upon the London literary scene during the period of World War I, each of them striving in flamboyant and self-mocking fashion to live eccentrically against the grain of a dull industrial world. This early pose was maintained by Edith Sitwell all her life.

Extravagant too were the verses of her earliest period, well suited for the brittle musical setting given *Façade* by her composer friend, William Walton. The music

was performed with the poet herself chanting her hypnotic and quasi-nonsensical lines about Daisy and Lily. Equally absurd but dazzling to the ear is the poem "Sir Beelzebub."

Only a perceptive few noted, however, that Miss Sitwell's extravagance was serious and that in her own amusing, provocative way she was forging a poetic instrument that would eventually do as much as the poetic practices of the better-known poets Pound and Eliot. When she began to write, she said later, the

conventional rhythms, outworn language, and stale imagery made necessary a new direction and more immediate effects of sight and sound in poetry. So when she wrote of the morning light in its "creaking" descent she was endeavoring to make the reader hear the morning as well as see it, and thus feel a new dimension to the dawn. The same deepening of sensuous experience is found in many of her poems during this period. Trees, for example, are compared to hissing green geese; the wind is a blue-maned horse that whinnies and neighs. Some of Miss Sitwell's experiments in synesthesia are strained and excessive, but just as often she does achieve that newness called for by Ezra Pound that is the goal of all good poets. Every reader of Miss Sitwell's criticism of her own work and of that of others, in essays and prefaces, instantly recognizes her keen ear and her constant concern with the relation between sense and sound in poetry, a concern that lay behind all her experimentation and made her deliberately strain or even break old associational patterns in her quest for fresh effects.

Miss Sitwell was obviously a student of the later Yeats and of Gerard Manley Hopkins, but her own work had a different cast and, as the years went by, a meaning all its own. Though the verbal techniques of *Façade* are clearly on display in *Gold Coast Customs*, its structure presented ideas and feelings never imagined by dazzled and largely amused audiences of Miss Sitwell's earlier work. Still chic, on one level her re-creation of savagery and cannibalism is obviously part of the 1920's movement that brought primitive art into modern culture, to be found in sculpture and in the early music of Stravinsky and Prokofieff. But like the novelist Conrad, Miss Sitwell shows, as the poem goes on, that the river of darkness flows through London as well as through The Congo. Cannibal feasts become the equivalents of Lady Bambergher's stupid but fashionable parties, and

Miss Sitwell creates a depiction of a spiritual wasteland that has not achieved the fame of T. S. Eliot's, but is not unworthy of comparison with it. The Negro worships a black stone that stands upright on a bone. But Lady Bambergher's god never lived at all. Unable to live or die, her god suffers as one in a trance, capable of hearing and bearing everything and yet remaining immobile.

The spirit of Blake, perhaps, tries to sing out here above her images of cannibalism new and old. Through most of the 1940's Miss Sitwell devoted herself to criticism and biography (most notably in her volume on Alexander Pope). But World War II challenged her concern, by now become agony, and found a talent that was worthy of the suffering of the time. Christ's image is now fundamental and right in her "Still Falls the Rain," called by C. M. Bowra, among others, one of the most moving, memorable poems in English about the war. From the magnificent ambiguity of the first word "still" as "always" and also as profound quietness, the comparison between man and god both dying forever is evoked in a contemporary hymn that purges finally profound terror through profound pity. In the poem the still-falling rain eventually becomes the blood from Christ's side, still shed for mankind.

More and more, as war's horror increased, Miss Sitwell found herself capable of turning the traditional images of light, of blood, of the rose of love into poems that somehow made the present meaningful through placing it in perspective with the past. Man's inhuman use of technology creates a new ice age in "The Song of the Cold," in which the poet finds the deadly chill in the heart of man himself. In "The Shadow of Cain" the whimsy of *Façade* has become frozen in a new kind of terror.

Hiroshima provided her with a new vision of the cities of Cain, where the sun descended and the earth ascended in a totemic emblem of destruction and loss.

Throughout her famous "Three Poems of the Atomic Age," Miss Sitwell evokes the terrible contrast between the old sun that nourished and gave life, and this new one of man's that kills and destroys. Yet the terrible cloud that brilliantly blossoms also evokes the rose, the traditional image of love both physical and spiritual, and through Miss Sitwell's nightmare vision Christ appears in the

terrible rain and walks on seas of blood.

The craft that merely seemed so fashionably clever in the 1920's came a long way before its end, unlike many of the lesser talents of that promising day. Though Miss Sitwell did not write so much as Yeats, or so intensely as Eliot, she nevertheless wrote a body of work that promises to live.

THE POETRY OF EICHENDORFF

Author: Josef von Eichendorff (1788-1857)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1837; *Julian*, 1853; *Robert und Guiscard*, 1855; *Lucius*, 1857

Josef von Eichendorff, the most popular poet among the German Romanticists was born March 10, 1788. He spent his childhood at the castle of his parents at Lubowitz in Silesia. These childhood years in the beautifully situated castle became the reservoir for his outpouring of romantic lyricism until the end of his life. It is said that nobody did more to help Germans appreciate the beauty of nature, and German Wanderlust owes much to Eichendorff's glorification of the wanderer. Eichendorff declares in his poem "The Happy Wanderer":

When God, His graciousness bestowing,
Sends man forth in the world so wide,
He unveils Life, His wonders showing
In wood, field, stream, and mountain-side.

The slothful, who at home are lying,
Are not refreshed by dawn's clear red;
They only know of children's crying,
Of sorrow, pain, and need of bread.

Many Germans living in a motorized age still agree with him.

Although Eichendorff was a wanderer, he was not trying to wander away from something. All his pilgrimages are inward. He was a member of the old Silesian aristocracy, and one literary critic named him the "last knight of knights." His feelings correspond to the experience of ordinary

people, however, and folkloristic elements are always present in his work. The Napoleonic Wars overshadowed his childhood paradise in Silesia, and to shelter young Eichendorff from proximity to war his parents sent him to the universities of Halle and Heidelberg. In Heidelberg he met the two writers credited with starting the German movement of Romanticism: Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, who had published, in 1806, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a major collection of German folksongs.

The romantically inclined Eichendorff became above all a lyricist, probably the most important one of the whole movement with the possible exception of Brentano. Eichendorff also wrote many prose pieces, but few are remembered now. Even his best known humoristic prose work *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* is mainly remembered for its lyrical qualities. His poems are always simple in theme and expression. He used a varied meter, and, refusing to develop a set pattern, adjusted the rhythm of language to the theme of the poem. His recipe for a poet was this: . . . Rise early in the morning; write under an open sky, in beautiful scenery when the soul is alert and the trees are singing. . . ." All subjects dear to the Romanticist are present in his poems: worship of nature, homesick-

ness, eternal roaming, moonlit nights, old chapels, deserted ruins, and moods of melancholy.

I wander through the quiet night;
There glides the gentle moon so white,
Oft breaking dark cloud-banks away,
And sometimes in the vale
Awakes a nightingale:
Then once more all is still and
gray. . . .

In one regard, however, Eichendorff differs from his fellow Romanticists: he had committed himself to Catholicism. He was opposed to the prevailing trend of his time of esthetical Catholicism, but there was never any doubt in his mind about his faith. Romanticism, which has been frequently interpreted as a substitution of adoration of nature for the adoration of God served Eichendorff only to display his belief in God's orderly world:

The small child rests from playing,
Soft Night knocks on the pane,
The angels at God's saying
Are keeping watch again.

In many other poems this theme is repeated:

I let the dear God guide my going;
To brook and lark and wood and
field
And Earth and Heaven favors showing,
My life He will from all harm shield.

His Catholicism was an almost revolutionary approach if one considers the prevailing liberal trends in literature at his time, as well as the fact that the preceding classicism was mainly expressed in Protestant terms. It is true that Eichendorff did not offer any great new ideas and his poems are without a passionate climax. He is not a philosopher, but this fact is probably the key for his enduring popularity. His poems, written with ease and charm, are free from tension and moralizing. When he paints with the dark colors of grief, he never fails to contrast them with the soft colors of consolation. Always present in his work is a

sense of the great order of things, in which man becomes a part of the whole when he is only willing to take time to reflect upon himself while observing the wonders of nature.

There's a sleeping song in all things,
Which dream on in peace unheard;
Yet the world awakes and loud sings,
If you know the magic word.

One of his poems describes how he was saddened by an encounter with evil, and yet while he was composing his poem the angels came and opened a door which radiated so much life that he could no longer see the evil. The melancholy of lost love found its greatest monument in his poem and folksong "The Broken Ring," which can be found in every collection of German folksongs:

In a spot cool and shady,
A mill wheel turns in state.
My loved one has gone from me,
Who lived there but of late. . . .

Hear I that mill wheel turning,
I know not what I will:
For death I most am yearning,
That all cares might be still.

The grief described here is not the tragic pain to be found in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which caused a suicide wave among unfortunate lovers after its publication. This poem shows the faraway wanderer and his remembrance of a loved one. A longing for faraway places (*Fernweh*) is frequently contrasted with homesickness (*Heimweh*), but grief is sublimated to increase sensibility, a participation in universal suffering (*Weltschmerz*) and joy.

In Heidelberg he also met another friend of Arnim and Brentano, Josef Görres, who was a Romanticist and the literary leader of German Catholicism. Görres succeeded in converting Eichendorff, by temperament a dreamer, into a member of a national resistance movement against the conquerer, Napoleon. Thus, in 1813, Eichendorff became a member of the much glorified voluntary

Prussian Corps Luetzow. In 1814 he married Luise von Larisch, the daughter of a country squire. After Napoleon returned from Elba he joined the army once more, but before he reached the front the Battle of Waterloo had decided Napoleon's fate. Eichendorff was now twenty-seven years old. He could not return to his childhood paradise in Silesia, for the castle and his father's fortune had been lost as a result of the war. He also was determined not to isolate himself as a poet. Especially he abhorred the scatter-brained scurrility which he described as the usual malady of poets. He took a position as a government official.

Eichendorff remained in government service for religious and educational affairs until 1844. When conflicts arose between his faithful adherence to the Catholic Church and the increasing government policy to reject Church influence in public life, he resigned. In 1837, Eichendorff published his first collection of poems. After his resignation he was able to devote even more time to his writing. When he visited Vienna, he was well received and declared in surprise, "By all means, they want to make a famous man out of me." In Vienna he also completed the first part of his history of literature under the title *Romantic Poetry*. Here he met the philosopher Friedrich Schlegel, a convert to Roman Catholicism, and a great friendship developed. Eichendorff's marriage was a happy one; he had two sons and two daughters. His most beloved youngest daughter died at an early age and her death was the greatest tragedy he ever experienced. What he said in his poems, he acted out in his life. He was able to find comfort in the belief that even his daughter's early death must be a part of God's plan. In 1855, Eichendorff retired with his family to the country estate of his son-in-law in Neisse. In the same year his wife died. Two years later

Eichendorff followed her.

Eichendorff's life, with the exception of his daughter's death, was free from any dramatics. A happy childhood, an education in Germany's best universities, a life among friends with common interests, and a happy marriage gave him the opportunity to lead the life he desired. Even when he joined the army he was spared the sight of battle. And he always found time for reflection:

When man's pleasure cry for rest,
Earth soft whispers as in dreams now,
Strangely sighing through each green
bough

What the heart has hardly guessed:
Of old times, mild sorrow's shimmer,—

And there flashes awe's pale glimmer,
Swift like lightning through the breast.

A justified question is whether a poet of such a period and such experiences can have any meaning for later generations who have problems about which the dreamer Eichendorff never imagined. The continued popularity of the Romantics answers this question. People compelled to cut their traditional roots as the result of force or voluntary decision as members of a more mobile society are grateful for the rest haven of Romanticism, which permits a pause for re-examination and rejuvenation.

The breeze in the wood stirs the tree-
tops
From dreams of the cliffs that thrill;
For the Lord moves over the hill-tops
And blesses the land so still.

The consolation of Eichendorff, the belief that everything is right in this world if we can learn to understand that even our grief is part of something greater than we, is the message from the wanderer of the nineteenth century to the wanderer of the twentieth century.

THE POETRY OF ELINOR WYLIE

Author: Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

First published: *Nets to Catch the Wind*, 1921; *Black Armour*, 1923; *Trivial Breath*, 1928; *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, 1929; *Collected Poems of Elinor Wylie*, 1932; *Last Poems*, 1943

Elinor Wylie lived in those regions of the spirit where only poets and saints are allowed to enter, saw life as a harsh riddle, and withdrew from a material world to concentrate on the intense, personal drama inside herself. Within the diminished mirror of her own mind she viewed men and landscapes, weaving in her small tapestries the record of man's doom. Her exile guarded her from the inhumanity of life. She sketched ardent and somber portraits with firm lines.

Elinor Wylie appeared late upon the literary scene, for she was thirty-five when her first book of poems was published. She had written poetry before, but these were collected in a limited edition which was sent only to her intimates and family friends. Meanwhile she was publishing poems in various magazines and early in 1921, at the request of a publishing company, she assembled her first book of poetry, which was published later that year as *Nets to Catch the Wind*. But publishing poetry is not a lucrative business and she began writing magazine sketches.

Her personality was contradictory, her moods fleeting and intense. One critic compared her to iced chalk, for she could be high-handed and aloof. But she could also be friendly and generous, almost childish in her delight in simple things. Like her writing, her speech revealed the wit and vigor of her mind. She had become a figure of literary legend when in 1923 she married William Rose Benét. That same year she published her second book of poems, *Black Armour*, and her first novel, *Jennifer Lorn*.

Seventeenth century writers were the source of Elinor Wylie's wit. She loved and admired a mind partly critical, partly imaginative, wholly subtle and ironic in

its perceptions of life. Her wit is evidenced by her use of subtle thought, aristocratic scorn, the sharpened epithets, and an imagery of symbolic birds and beasts, jeweled metals, rare, exotic things of this world. These are also the lyric gifts which add sharp, dry precision to the poetry of John Donne. Like him and other metaphysical poets, she inhabited countries of the imagination. The grave was her answer to the problem of desire. She received from Donne the pride and courage of a lively mind, an instrument to use against the world's inhumanity and man's desire of the flesh. Thus, even if disaster strikes, the brave spirit may still preserve its own integrity.

Dante was a great metaphysical poet, as were Donne, Webster, Blake, and Emily Dickinson. To analyze or define metaphysical verse is difficult, for its aesthetic principles are based upon a system which exhibits all the precision of logic while being contained in its own imaginative wildness. This type of poetry is a literary culture which has appeared in every age in slightly different form and is based on passion and intelligence. God and the universe and the human soul lie beyond the physical world and it is in this area that metaphysical poetry attempts to express meaning in symbols of the poet's imagination and to relate all human experience to the one great cycle of life, death, and immortality. For that reason life becomes a pattern which the poet uses to create the solid and essential fact. An image which becomes the exact likeness of both thought and feeling is one of the most characteristic devices of metaphysical poetry. By use of this image the poet's experience becomes objective so that thought and emotion assume a new vitality of imaginative concentration.

The element of surprise is another device provided by the association of apparently unrelated objects to suggest a wider range of experience than these objects commonly reveal in real life. Thus Elinor Wylie belongs to the tradition of older writers she admired, poets who used abstract ecstasy of thought and emotion as an approach to essential truths of the spirit. Her work, although original, is not free from the succession of literature.

She was extremely sensitive to the powers contained in language. The quality of her prose reflected the quality of her poetry, for actually her prose was poetic in its style and effects. She wrote with amazing precision, but this precision never sacrificed her excellent ability of phrasing, expression, or use of words. She knew exactly what she was going to say and made very few changes in a work once it was on paper.

Shelley had a great influence on Elinor Wylie. Adoring the man, she wrote about him in both poetry and prose. Her "red carpet to Shelley," to use the title of her sonnet sequence, was her novel *The Orphan Angel*. But the past was not her only literary contact, for she could list among her friends such literary figures as Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dorothy Parker, Sinclair Lewis, Aldous Huxley, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford, and, of course, her brother-in-law, Stephen Vincent Benét. She was constantly trying to fill social obligations while working on her poetry or novels. She would escape to England whenever she could, but still she was not alone.

It was Elinor Wylie's brilliance of technique which gave her first book, *Nets to Catch the Wind*, its appeal to the readers of the period. Many of the poems in this collection are songs of knowledge, and they contain much bitterness. She scorned her familiar world, preferring instead empty landscapes, leaden skies, silver streams, white, frozen wintry sleep. There are times when her poems echo resoundingly; again her lines are brief, blood-dripping daggers, and at rare inter-

vals, tears. Life was her durable foe, she insisted, and "A Proud Lady," "Sanctuary," and "Valentine" bear evidence of this battle. "The Eagle and the Mole" records with bitter didacticism her wish to live free of the common world, to live alone.

Her desire to be free is a recurring theme in her later poems. *Black Armour*, the title of her second volume of poetry, takes on added significance in the light of her desire to escape. Elinor Wylie used poetry as her defense against the world, but death would be her only true escape from a too-oppressive mortality. Man touches infinity when he is finally in the grave. Beneath her lines she reveals deep personal emotion, and she gained courage from her own feeling of martyrdom.

Trivial Breath, her most uneven collection, is divided between lyrics of her own personal experience and a payment of literary debts. Her dedication to the volume is a graceful acknowledgment of her debt to the English language. Elinor Wylie spent a great deal of time reading, collecting old books until her work area was practically covered with them. Her poetry and her prose show the rich coloring of the writings of the past. She could adapt her reading to her own works without destroying her own style or originality. In *Trivial Breath* we see the true metaphysician trying to show us that mind rather than heart governs the emotions. This philosophy is explicit in such poems as "Desolation Is a Delicate Thing," "False Prophet," and "Last Supper." Death, she said, was not something to fear or hate. She welcomed the transmutation of the body and admonished her soul in bright, brittle images and metaphors.

In such poems as "Confession of Faith" and "Lament for Glasgerion," she wore her heroic mask like a challenge. Criticism cannot discount the greatness of portrait poems such as "Miranda's Supper," "The Puritan's Ballad," and "Peter and John." These poems show the passion and vigor of her earlier poems along

with awareness of too scrupulous discrimination in her work.

Angels and Earthly Creatures, published shortly after her death, exhibits the fullest scope of her talent. There is little of the "over-fine" in the elegiac moods which pervade this collection. Without question this volume reveals a lyric power mature in its integrity but simple in freshness of vision. Beneath a severe articulation of phrase her poetry holds beauty and meaning. It has lost the dark didacticism shown in much of her earlier poetry, yet it retains its wisdom and intellectual clarity. It is abstract, but it is alive with passion. These poems are records of moments captured and held within firm imagery; the lyrics soar with ecstasy and bitterness that are the triumph of life over death through art.

The sonnet sequence, "One Person," fits into the great tradition of English poetry. In it the fear of death is overcome by an exultant affirmation of love and faith. It is her most passionate revelation of the woman and poet, just as "This Corruptible" and "Hymn to Earth" are the complete expression of her philosophy.

Collected Poems of Elinor Wylie contains a number of poems not previously published in book form. One of the best

is "A Tear for Cressid," which Elinor Wylie had set to a tune of her own composing. Some of the poems were written when Elinor Wylie was working on the collection titled *Black Armour*. "The Heart's Desire" was an experimental work which she liked extremely well. There are several pieces of lighter verse written chiefly for her close friends. In this group of witty and skillful pieces is a short portrait of herself, "Portrait in Black Paint, With a Very Sparing Use of Whitewash." The humorous poem, "Cri du Cœur," is also typical. Although she distorts the image, Elinor Wylie is still evident through the mask lightly worn.

Elinor Wylie has left behind a collection of poetry bearing the stamp of a dedicated artist. She proved through her own work what endeavor and a courageous spirit and a free mind can accomplish in a few years in a confusing world where life is constantly showing a strange, new side, but where she managed to find her purpose in life and be the master of it. Now, only her work is left to speak for her, at times seriously, sometimes half-jokingly, as in such lines as those in which she expresses a keen desire to display a generous mind rather than the polish and precision most frequently associated with her poetic style.

THE POETRY OF EMERSON

Author: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

First published: *Poems*, 1847; *May-Day and Other Pieces*, 1867; *Selected Poems*, 1876

In his essay "The Poet," Emerson expresses his belief that poetry, like any art, should be organic rather than simply metrically or musically beautiful:

For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem, —a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. . . . The poet has a new thought: he has a whole new experience to unfold; he

will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune.

It is Emerson's thesis that poetry should not be an embellished art, but a living form which corresponds to higher truth. Like Poe, Emerson believed that true art is the creation of beauty, but he had quite different ideas about what can be considered beautiful. Where Poe believed that the chief merit of poetry is

found in its rhythmical beauty and ability to arouse emotion, Emerson held that the worth of a poem lies in its philosophical truth. Emerson likewise believed that the mind of the poet is not "a music-box of delicate tunes and rhythms," but an instrument by which mankind is enlightened. In other words, the verse itself is worthless unless it is an integral part of the truth it conveys:

For verse is not a vehicle to carry a sentence as a jewel is carried in a case: the verse must be alive, and inseparable from its contents, as the soul of man inspires and directs the body.

Emerson is no less specific in his views concerning the way in which a poet proceeds to create this type of poem. The true poet, to Emerson, is one who is able to intuit impressions from the "Over-Soul" (that universal truth and spirit of mankind which directs all thinking men) and to relate, through verse, instructive truth found within these impressions. This process entails first a testing of the authority of the impressions (whether they be inferior or superior) and then a spontaneous translation of them, without revision, into poetry. Thus the poet is not a carpenter of entertaining sounds, a man of talent, but rather one who instructs, a man of genius.

Finally, Emerson believed that poetry should be of a specific thematic nature: ideally, a poem should show the unity in nature. Beauty, to Emerson, is that quality of likeness in all of nature's objects; consequently, in order for a poem to be truly beautiful it must demonstrate the unity which exists in the diverse objects in nature.

Emerson views the poem, the poet, and the creative process as being integral parts of true poetry. The poet must be of a certain character, in effect a philosophical mystic who intuits truth. He must be able to place this truth on paper with strict economy and without revision, with

the resulting poem being an unembellished, organic chronicle of the unity of nature.

Emerson's poetic theory is extremely Platonic and typical of his whole Transcendental doctrine concerning the objectives of the true genius, or "man thinking." Yet Emerson would probably be the first to admit that, while his theory is quite beautiful, its practical application is difficult. Emerson himself applied it completely to only one of his own poems, "Days." The poem, which is concerned with the duality of the ideal and the real, is a sort of poetic parable of man's mortality.

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic
Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot der-
vishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that
holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the
pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the
Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

About these lines Emerson said, "I have written within a twelve-month verses which I do not remember the composition or correction of, and could not write the like today, and have only, for proof of their being mine, various external evidences as the manuscript in which I find them. . . ."

On the whole, Emerson's shorter poems are considered superior to his longer ones, and of these "Days," "The Rhodora," "The Snow-Storm," "Concord Hymn," and "Each and All" are the most representative of Emerson's verse. "Days," for example, is one of the best of Emerson's personal poems: "The Rhodora," on the other hand, shows nature generalized. In this poem Emerson pre-

sents the organic theme of the unity in nature's plan symbolized by the beauty of a secluded flower.

Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and
sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made
for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for be-
ing.

Another approach used by Emerson was to present the beauty of nature in simple, descriptive verse. In "The Snow-Storm" the poet describes the power and beauty which exist simultaneously in this natural force.

Announced by all the trumpets of the
sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the
fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited
air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and
the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the gar-
den's end.

Equally as uncomplicated in theme and presentation are Emerson's occasional poems such as "Concord Hymn," which was composed for the dedication of a monument to those who fought at the Battle of Concord.

By the rude bridge that arched the
flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the
world.

The most significant of Emerson's poems, however, are those in which he attempts to present his ideas of the organic unity in nature. One of the best known of these poems is "Each and All," a well-organized work concerning the interdependence of all created objects. Emerson begins with the general statement that

All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.

He then substantiates this belief by listing three representative instances of objects losing their beauty when they are removed from the whole natural context: the sparrow's song without the river and sky, the delicate sea shells without the seashore, and the graceful maid without the "virgin train." Finally, the poet sees the woodland and is able to recall the joy of nature which he experienced as a child, and he concludes:

Again I saw, again I heard,
The rolling river, the morning bird;
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

"Brahma" is another of Emerson's attempts to explain his philosophy of nature in verse. Here Brahma, the first-person speaker, symbolizes to Emerson the "world soul" or "Over-soul" which gives meaning to all creation:

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

One cannot help noticing the similarity between the theme in these lines and the overall idea of Whitman's poetry: the belief that there is a divine plan and a divine order in which nothing is without significance.

Closely akin to the theme of the organic nature of things is Emerson's description of the problem of artistic creativity which he depicts in his essay "The Poet" and in the poems "The Problem" and "Merlin." In "The Problem" the poet states that, like nature, art must be organic, and he uses the Parthenon and the Pyramids as examples of organic art:

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,
As the best gem upon her zone;
And Morning opes with haste her lids,
To gaze upon the Pyramids.

In order to be in tune with nature, the artist must be free from any tradition or routine which could stifle his creativity and prevent him from being artistically organic. Thus the priest in the poem represents one whose creative freedom is suppressed, and he is contrasted with the poet-speaker:

I like a church; I like a cowl;
I love a prophet of the soul;
And on my heart monastic aisles
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive
smiles:
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowléd churchman
be.

Emerson first found this philosophy of organic art in the works of Coleridge, and it was his ambition as a poet to become such an artist. In "Merlin" he expresses his belief that poetry like that of Poe, which relies on meter and rhyme, is devoid of any real depth:

No jingling serenader's art,
Nor tinkle of piano strings,
Can make the wild blood start
In its mystic springs.

It was, rather, mystical verse such as Coleridge's own "Kubla Khan" that was Emerson's goal.

Emerson wrote his first poem at the age of ten, was chosen class poet at Harvard, and published only three volumes of poetry during his lifetime. Although he had a wide range of knowledge extending from Oriental mysticism to Plato, and though he knew what he wanted to write and how it should be written, nevertheless he could not become the free-

spirited poet he describes, nor could he break with the traditions which he fought.

Many critics believe that Emerson's primary ability was as a poet, not as a prose writer. Certainly his poems are more concise than his prose and lack the slow development of thought, while containing the essence of his ideas. Like his essays, however, his poems are poorly organized and are lacking in the organic quality which he speaks of so frequently. Actually, his descriptions of what poetry should be serve as an excellent preface to a study of Whitman's poetry; for it is the style and theme found in Whitman's works that Emerson probably would have liked to produce. Only in a very few of his own poems did Emerson succeed in becoming an inspired, organic poet.

Whatever else may be said, Emerson showed the desire of American writers to express themselves in a truly creative fashion rather than through the traditional modes. While Emerson may have failed to produce great works of art, one must consider that what he was attempting was extremely new and that the ideas he tried to present are by no means simple. Indeed, many of his poems are excellent, and in a relative sense he was a good poet. Nevertheless, it is for his poetic theory that he should be valued. His theory of organic art was truly modern and heralded the age which was to follow. If one contrasts his poetic theory with that of the eighteenth century tradition which he faced, one can realize that Emerson was not the traditional poet that he is generally said to be.

THE POETRY OF EMILY BRONTË

Author: Emily Brontë (1818-1848)

First published: *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, 1846; *Selections from the Poems of Ellis Bell*, 1850; *The Complete Poems*, edited by C. W. Hatfield, 1941

In criticism today a poem is read first as an entity in itself; difficulties in reading may be clarified by reference to the author's other poems, his life, his other

writings, his times, and the like. Exceptions to this rule are the units of a poetic sequence which are lesser entities within a greater whole. But scholarship often

imposes two kinds of superior entity on a single work: its place in the author's canon and its significance as an artifact of its time. Emily Brontë's poems may be read simply as single works of art; when understood, however, as a body of work—apart from the reflection of biography or their significance as mid-nineteenth century English verse—they form not one but two larger entities. Her two hundred poems, some still in manuscript, belong to the "Gondal Chronicles" which she and her younger sister Anne composed from the summer of 1832, when Emily was fourteen and Anne twelve, until Emily's death in 1848; thirty-nine of these poems appeared in 1846 and 1850 as the work of "Ellis Bell" without any reference to Gondal. In the case of Emily Brontë, the smaller number of poems—her "selected poems"—have the greater universality of appearing as complete entities and are here treated as to all intents and purposes the collected poems of Emily Brontë as "Ellis Bell."

The moot point in such a course is whether "Ellis Bell's" poems make complete sense without the remaining poems of Emily Brontë, constituting the "Gondal Chronicles" as we have them. The affirmative depends on two grounds: how the "Ellis Bell" poems came to be published in the lifetime of Emily and her older sister Charlotte and the amount of Gondal reference in the original poems necessary to their meaning. If there is little significant reference in a poem, it can be easily released from its original frame and considered separately. *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* is the fourth step in transforming the Gondal poems into those of "Ellis Bell." The first and third steps were taken by Emily Brontë herself. In the winter of 1843-1844 she transcribed some of the Gondal poems from the small printed notebooks of the "Chronicles" into two manuscript books of fair copies. One is dated February, 1844. In October of the following year Charlotte accidentally read one of these books and, breaking the family

code of the "secret plays," began insisting that the poems be published simply as a book of verse. Emily reluctantly agreed, probably so that the poems of Charlotte ("Currer") and Anne ("Acton") could appear with hers and thus help Charlotte's desperate gamble to capitalize on the writing ability of the three sisters against the looming possibility of their father's death and their own return to teaching simply in order to live. Charlotte, as a mature literary connoisseur of thirty, was right in her belief in the perishable quality of Emily's best verse, and her decision—the most significant event in the lives of all three sisters—had three important results: it ended the "Angrian Chronicles" on which she had labored for twenty years with Branwell—the dangerously compulsive "web of childhood" that Miss Fannie Ratchford has shown it to be; it opened the way for the novels which did bring Charlotte money (but no provision against death); and, in Emily's double insistence on keeping her identity secret and erasing the Gondalian references in the poems, it provided a body of her poetry which differs textually from the Gondal canon and appears before the world as the work of "Ellis Bell." The transformation was completed when twenty-one of these poems appeared in the 1846 volume and eighteen in the 1850 *Selections from the Poems of Ellis Bell*, edited considerably by Charlotte but along the lines Emily had begun.

A final reason for following Emily's decision to publish her poems as "Ellis Bell" is that the "Gondal Chronicles" are incomplete; thus the full Gondal matrix is irrecoverable. Thanks, however, to Miss Ratchford's *The Brontë's Web of Childhood* and the work of other scholars the story can be outlined.

In this outline the lonely landscapes are sometimes called "moors" in order to stress that the "Gondal Chronicles" are as much sources for *Wuthering Heights* as they are the inspiration of Emily's poems; these occur at static moments in the ac-

tion and celebrate the emotions of the character concerned (identified by initials used in the headings to the poems, most of them now lost in Emily's editing the poems for publication); the poems may refer to past events in Gondal and to the present situation of the character but the emphasis of the poem is on the emotion, and this is the prime justification for treating the "Ellis Bell" poems as the "selected poems" of Emily Brontë. A comparison of two such poems, both from the 1846 volume, will show the varying amount of Gondalian reference still in the poems and pose the question whether that reference is essential to understanding the works.

The two poems entitled "Remembrance" and "Death" were written to express Queen Augusta's continuing desolation at the loss of Julius; both poems resolve to continue mourning because the first "May" ("Death") or first "morn" ("Remembrance") is the "Sweet Love of youth" ("Remembrance") and is now gone forever. The resolution is achieved only after two different temptations have been resisted. In "Remembrance" the "Sweet Love of youth" is asked to forgive "if I forget thee," not because the speaker wants to forget "memory's rapturous pain" but because she apparently cannot die until her appointed time, even though it is her "burning wish to hasten Down to that tomb already more than mine." In "Death" the speaker has been tempted by the return of Spring (or the healing passage of time):

Little mourned I for the parted Glad-
ness,
For the vacant nest and silent song;
Hope was there, and laughed me out
of sadness,
Whispering, "Winter will not linger
long."

But the speaker rejects the available hope: "Time, for me, must never blossom more!" She asks Death to strike down the budded branch and return it to Eternity, and thus she rejects "Life's restoring tide."

There are more overt references to Gondal in "Remembrance" than in "Death," but in each case they simply give the emotion of the poem an objective correlative to sustain turning the emotion into a poem. In "Death" the references to Augusta's love for Julius can be seen in the phrases "when I was most confiding/In my certain Faith of Joy to be" and "the vacant nest." In "Remembrance" they are more concrete ("that northern shore" and "fifteen wild Decembers"), but in sum the references amount to a very small percentage in poems each of more than two hundred words. In effect these references, in the versions published by "Ellis Bell," are no more essential to a satisfactory reading of the poems than is a knowledge of Arthur Henry Hallam necessary in order to understand Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

The emotion of the speaker in the two poems is conventional in poetry and natural in life; Emily Brontë's claim to being a poet is her personal variation on that theme of loss of the loved one. In some of her other poems there is more reference to Gondalian names and situations—the mother who loses her baby on the moor in "The Outcast Mother" or the references to "Irene" in "Faith and Despondency" and to "Edward" in "A Death-Scene"—but it is still possible to see these as the necessary though extraordinary furniture of the poem.

Emily Brontë's poems depend on the conventional antithesis of inner reality to superficial appearances, a reality discovered or celebrated in the course of the poem. Her unique handling of the convention was to prefer the eccentric or perverse to that normally celebrated in poetry; she seeks the moors, not a pleasant landscape (as Charlotte observed in introducing her *Selections from the Poems of Ellis Bell*); she chooses December before May; she prefers solitude to company and does not make the conventional return to society at the close of the poem; above all she seeks death, and she really means it. She conveys the intensity

of her own emotions by dramatizing the situation and focusing on concrete objects, generally aspects of nature, to sing of sorrow; as in "Song":

The linnet in the rocky dells,
The moor-lark in the air,
The bee among the heather-bells
That hide my lady fair:

Needless to say the "fair" lady is in her grave and "in her tranquil sleep" where Emily rejoiced to go; as Charlotte dryly observed "the colour and perfume of the flowers [i.e. poems] are not such as fit them for festal uses." Charlotte's famous dictum—"Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils"—is shown in most of the poems, where the speaker chafes against

restrictions and principally that of the body itself, especially in her three most famous: "The Old Stoic" (as it is misnamed), and the stanzas beginning "Often rebuked, yet always back returning" and "No coward soul is mine." The popular choice of these is improved by acquaintance with the other "Ellis Bell" poems; together they sum up her rejection of the unreal world of "riches," "long-past history," and temporal doubts of God's being. The poet affirms her faith only in the moors "where my own nature would be leading" and, given that nature, she achieves a resounding vision of earth which "can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell" and of total and real existence only in God.

THE POETRY OF ESENIN

Author: Sergei Esenin (1895-1925)

Principal published works: *Radunitsa*, 1916; "Ionia," 1919; *Moscow of the Taverns*, 1922

After 1910 a general reaction occurred in Russian literature against the vagueness and obscurity of Symbolism. Acmeism, led by Gumilyov, and Futurism, under Mayakovsky, represented two of the directions taken by this reaction. A third direction was that followed by the so-called "peasant poets." These writers, led by Nikolai Klyuyev, expounded a mystical faith in the Russian peasantry and worked folklore and religious liturgy into their poems. The greatest of the peasant poets was Sergei Esenin. Beginning as a student of Klyuyev, he soon surpassed his master in the form and content of his poetry.

The term "peasant poet" is extremely apt in Esenin's case, for he always lamented the passing of traditional Russian life, the village, and the unsophisticated religion of the peasants. In one of his prose works, *Mary's Keys*, published in 1920, Esenin wrote about the origins of Russian art and culture and about the disintegration of Russian religiosity. He felt that without religious traditions the very source of folk art would disappear;

whereas the earlier peasant had been able to orient himself in his environment, Esenin now felt that the peasants were uprooted and spiritually lost in an increasingly industrialized world. One critic of Esenin, V. Zavalishin, has said that Esenin knew and understood the meaning of folk art and the peasantry not as a learned scholar but as a man who had lived with them since childhood.

In 1916, Esenin published his first collection of poems, *Radunitsa*, a quasi-pagan spring ritual for the dead. These early poems resemble Klyuyev's work and often glorify the tranquil beauty of nature. In the following year Esenin welcomed the Revolution, but he saw it as a religious and not a political event. He felt that Bolshevism would wear itself out in time and would be superseded by a religious paradise. He saw only one obstacle to this earthly paradise: peasant fear and servility. The poem "Ionia," written in 1918, urged the peasants toward courage and daring and predicted the advent of a proletarian Eden. Esenin's religion was that of the Old Believers, a group which

had split from the Orthodox Church, ostensibly over the question of whether the sign of the cross should be made with two fingers or three. The Old Believers had since dedicated themselves to dogma and fanatical faith, but Esenin reduced this faith to an earthly scale in such poems as "Returning Home" and "The Comrade." Before long, however, Esenin realized the Revolution was not strengthening religion but substituting other ideas for it. In the poem "Mare's Ships," Esenin finally, though impressionistically, condemned the Revolution for the suffering and death it had caused.

Esenin feared the industrialization brought about by the Revolution. As an outward sign of increasing disillusionment, he founded, along with other younger writers, the Imaginism movement which flourished in Moscow from 1918 to 1920. The Imaginists, asserting that the distinctive nature of poetry lay in its imagery, tended to make their poems collections of word pictures, often far-fetched and exotic when they set coarse and crude images next to pathetic and sublime ones in their search for effects. But far more striking than their theory of literature was the kind of life they led. These writers took up a bohemian life of orgies and scandals, and it is said that Esenin outdid them all in license and violence.

Esenin recorded his psychological experiences during these years in "A Hooligan's Confession," published in 1921, and in a collection called *Moscow of the Taverns*, appearing a year later. Soviet critics have condemned these poems as full of filth and vice with nothing to elevate them. But at the same time these verses are something of a personal confession. It is as though Esenin realized that his depression could not be dissolved in vodka, and only too well he also realized he was out of step with the times. In one of his poems, full of despair, he considers himself the last poet of the peasants. And in another poem he feels that his poetry has fallen from grace, and, probably, so

has he. In 1921, Esenin wrote a play in verse entitled *Pugachey*. It is a collection of lyrical fragments which, although not historically true, does possess an element of social veracity colored by Esenin's passionate sympathy for the enslaved peasants.

With many poets Imaginism was simply a literary pose, a desire to shock the bourgeoisie as the Futurists had done before them. But for Esenin this life was more tragic. He felt the full force of its pessimism. His disillusionment with the Revolution which had led him into the Imaginist circle continued unabated, forcing him to say in one poem that he has been deceived. By 1920 the anti-peasant aspect of the Revolution had become even more pronounced, and Esenin culminated this period of drunkenness and scandal with his marriage to Isadora Duncan, the American dancer, in 1922. Without a common language between them, they found a bond in high living. A year later, after an unsuccessful and shabby world tour, their marriage ended.

These events seem to have sobered Esenin, and on his return to Russia he tried to adjust to the new order and to regain and reconsider his ideas and feelings about the rural Russia he had given up for Moscow. Although he returned to his native village, he could not recapture his past, and the lyrics he wrote in this period are sad and reflective, foreshadowing his death. In one poem he said that he was destined to die in the back alleys of Moscow, not in the village of thatched houses where he had been born. In another poem Esenin calls himself the last of the village poets. He celebrates the beauty of nature and complains about the coming of machinery to destroy the beautiful fields. The loss of his youth and joy in the village, the changes created by his urbanization, cause him to grieve, and his poem reflects his later death by his own hand. Most of his tavern poems contain a tragic reflection.

Eventually Esenin turned from Imaginism and chose Pushkin for his new

model; and in "Persian Themes" Esenin's verse does resemble the lucid, simple verse of his new model. During the last year of his life Esenin wrote the long, autobiographical poem, "Anna Snegina," which portrays a Russian village during the Revolution, and "The Black Man," a narrative poem in which a man confesses his many sins. In several of his shorter lyrics of this period Esenin prophesied his own death, and on December 27, 1925, he hanged himself in a Leningrad hotel room after writing a farewell poem with his own blood. The verses ended with the now famous lines in which he declared that death is not new, but life is no newer.

Esenin's last poems are simple and melodious, sometimes sentimental and sometimes nostalgic. During the 1920's he was extremely popular for these verses. His lyrical, melancholic poems of the rural landscape, village life, and animals appealed both to Communist youth and to older Russians who still remembered pre-revolutionary days. Esenin seemed to have a special feeling for animals, calling them "younger brothers" and dedicating several of his poems to them, as in "The Cow" and "Song About a Dog."

Because Esenin rejected the Revolution and because he led a life of riot, Eseninism was officially condemned by the Communist Party. Officialdom described him as a *kulak* (rich peasant) poet and did not allow his work to be reprinted. Censorship did not dim Esenin's popularity; in fact, one critic has called him the most widely read twentieth century Russian poet, both at home and abroad.

In a sense Esenin's personal fate was symbolic of a Russia in transition. During his lifetime his country changed from an agrarian society to a complex industrial state. The conflict between what had been and what was emerging, and the failure of many of the hopes people had for the Revolution, were expressed personally in the poems of Esenin. Perhaps this is the secret of his great appeal. Esenin, unlike Mayakovsky, refused to compromise himself for the Revolution. He remained openly critical of the government, never diminishing the vigor of his own poems as Mayakovsky had done. And when he could take no more, when both his personal and public life offered him nothing more, he chose death.

THE POETRY OF FLECKER

Author: James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915)

Principal published works: *The Bridge of Fire*, 1907; *Forty-Two Poems*, 1911; *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, 1913; *The Old Ships*, 1915; *Collected Poems*, 1916; *Hassan*, 1922

It is possible to risk the generalization that there are two types of the minor poet. To one type belongs the writer who fits neatly into the style prevailing at the moment, echoing all of its mannerisms so faithfully that his poems cannot be distinguished from those of any other equally minor figure of the day. Then there is the opposite type, the minor writer who never seems able to settle on any style and whose poems, in consequence, seem to have been written by half a dozen people. It would not be un-

fair to place Flecker in this second category.

According to J. C. Squire, who wrote the introduction to the *Collected Poems*, Flecker was much impressed by the poetic theory of the French Parnassians. Squire then quotes a passage from the preface to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* in which Flecker expressed his admiration for that school of poetry, which had come into being under the leadership of Charles Marie Leconte de Lisle as a protest against the excessive

emotionalism and subjectivity of the Romantics; in addition, the Parnassians wished to return French prosody to something like its former strictness. According to their point of view, a poem should be purely objective and should rigorously exclude the exploitation of the author's private feelings. The doctrine of the school has been described as "Spartan"; its culmination as the hundred and eighteen sonnets of José Maria de Hérédia, a Cuban-born French poet whom Flecker greatly admired. Except for George Moore, who rejected from his *Anthology of Pure Poetry* in 1924 any verse with a taint of subjectivity, on the grounds that the only permanent world is the world of things, Flecker seems to have been the only English writer influenced by the Parnassian doctrine. He described that which was contrary to the Parnassian principles as dull, vulgar, or obscure ver-
sifying.

Flecker's theorizing is revealed as basically a part of the revolt against Victorianism that began in the 1880's and continued until World War I. Also, he illustrates another aspect of the *rapprochement* with French literature that marked this same period; instead of turning to the French Symbolists, as the poets of the generation before his had done, he turned to the Parnassians. Yet it is difficult to find in Flecker's work (though he translated one of Leconte de Lisle's poems) any obvious influence of the French school that he so much admired. Indeed, some of his early poems, such as the "First Sonnet of Bathrolaire," sound amazingly like products of the 1890's. And there is the inevitable translation from Baudelaire—this time of the "Litany to Satan," an attempt of which it can be said only that he fared better than did Arthur Symons, a statement that is no great compliment.

But whatever Flecker's poetic theories may have been, a reading of his verse will reveal a poet working in the Romantic tradition. The years just before World War I represented a turning point in

English poetry. There were the Georgians who, reacting against the artificialities of the 1890's, let sunlight and fresh air into poetry by rediscovering the beauty of the English countryside and the speech of everyday life. At the same time, the hard, dry, intellectual poetry predicted by T. E. Hulme was coming into being; 1915, the year of Flecker's last volume, saw the publication of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which might be said to have turned modern poetry in its present direction. In only one poem did Flecker attempt the style that we now think of as "modern." That poem is "Oxford Canal." On the other hand, such a poem as "Brumana" is very much in the Georgian style, some of its lines recalling the work of Rupert Brooke, with whom Flecker has often been compared.

In 1910, Flecker, who had entered the consular service, was sent to Constantinople and spent most of the few years of life remaining to him in the Near East. What might be called his "Oriental" poems date from this period. These are the poems by which he is best known, and some of them were incorporated into his posthumously produced play, *Hassan*. These poems are quite beautiful, even though somewhat artificial in their carefully cultivated Arabian Nights manner: "Gates of Damascus," "Yasmin," "Saadabad."

It is difficult to believe that the lush, romantic lines of Flecker's "Oriental" poems were written by the same man who wrote "Oxford Canal" or the terse "Tenebris Interlucentem."

Although *Hassan* is written in prose, this play should be mentioned here, for its posthumous publication and production in 1922 brought Flecker more attention than he had received during his life; and through it he is known to the generation that can remember the 1920's. Mario Praz, in *The Romantic Agony*, dismisses the play as a "sadistic fantasy," and it is true that the concluding scene, in which the lovers are tortured to death, is suffi-

ciently gruesome. The plot, which has its roots in *Measure for Measure*, has a certain degree of tragic intensity, and the dialogue, written in a deliberately overblown, pseudo-Oriental style, is also effective within the framework of the romantic plot. Into the play were incorporated several of the "Oriental" lyrics written earlier, and as part of this adventure of Haroun Al-Rashid, they appear to better advantage than as individual poems. The epilogue to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* was used as a grand finale to the play, where it makes a moving and memorable conclusion to the tragedy.

Comparison has often been made between Flecker and Rupert Brooke, undoubtedly because they were contemporaries and died during World War I, in which Flecker could not serve because of

his ill health. There are some points of similarity, and Flecker's unfinished "Burial in England" shows that he could have written war poetry of no mean order had he not been a dying man. But Brooke was by all odds the finer poet of the two. In his later poems that emerged from his experiences in the South Seas, he had begun to show what he might have become; he had developed a "style" that was his own. To this point of development Flecker, perhaps because of his physical condition, never attained. He was still groping, still trying to find his own voice, when he died. Hence, he is now remembered for a few individual poems, very different from each other, rather than for a body of work that somehow fitted together. He was a late Romantic, writing at the end of a period.

THE POETRY OF GABRIELA MISTRAL

Author: Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, 1889-1957)

Principal published works: *Desolación*, 1922 (*Desolation*); *Ternura*, 1925 (*Tenderness*); *Preguntas*, 1930 (*Questions*); *Nubes Blancas*, 1930 (*White Clouds*); *Tala*, 1938

Gabriela Mistral was born Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, on April 7, 1889, of Spanish and Basque lineage; her father, who deserted the family when Lucila was but a child of three years, was a teacher and a poet. Her early years were spent among the peasants, and the poet, who speaks of herself as one of the *campesinos*, put the peasant's love of the land and the countryside into her poetry.

To understand the poetry of Gabriela Mistral, one must know something of her life. To begin with, she always thought of herself as a teacher first and a poet second, even after she had been awarded the Noble Prize for Literature in 1945. She began her teaching career at the age of fifteen, with unusual success. In 1912 she became a teacher in secondary schools, moving up from primary schools, with the help, it is said, of Pedro Aguirre Cerda, who later became President of Chile, the poet's native land. During the

years 1918-1922 the poet served as director of liceos at Punta Arenas, Temuco, and Santiago. In 1922 she had become so well known in educational circles that she was sent to Mexico to help in the educational reforms in that country. Her fame spread, and in later life she held a host of educational and official positions. She taught in the United States at Columbia University, Vassar, and Middlebury College. She was Chilean representative on the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations, in Geneva. She was Chilean consul in Barbara, California. She died in New Naples, Madrid, Lisbon, Nice, and Santa York City in 1957.

Gabriela Mistral's first fame as a poet came when three sonnets on death were read for her (though she was in the audience) at Chile's Juegos Florales, in 1914. These poems, which brought her national acclaim, were, ironically, the indirect result of a suicide. Gabriela had fallen in

love with a young man about five years before. The young man, Romelio Ureta, killed himself with a gunshot when he was unable to repay money he had "borrowed" from the railroad which employed him, to help a friend in need of funds. Also ironically, her first published volume of poems appeared, not in her native Chile, but in the United States, in 1922, after interest in her poetry had been generated by Federico de Onís, in a lecture on her poetry at the Columbia University Instituto de las Españas. This volume was *Desolación*.

Part of the poetry in *Desolación*, in the section entitled "Dolor," was also the direct result of the death of the young man she loved. But there are also poems which show the poet's interest and feeling for religion, her deep maternal feeling for children, and her inspiration in teaching. There are also some poems for children, as well as those written for the adult public. The poems about love show that love for her, at least as a poet, was not a sensual gratification, nor was it joy. The poet tells the reader that it is a bitter experience that ends with death, unless it is the kind of love that becomes almost a religion, so that it can transcend mortality. Her own love, as she writes about it, was an overpowering, jealous love, so strong that it made her, a plain woman, into one of beauty. She describes in "El Ruego" (The Prayer) how she wants her dead lover, a sinner because he took his own life, admitted to the presence and grace of God, despite his sinful end; she pleads humbly, but at times even forcefully, for him. Herself childless, another side of love that Gabriela Mistral celebrated is maternity, the fruits of love. The poet says that sterility which brings forth no child is a source of shame, and the woman who suffers it a tragic figure. Woman, she says, is instinctively maternal.

Maternity and teaching fused together for Gabriela Mistral. In her "Teacher's Prayer" she begs God to make her more maternal than an ordinary mother, so that

she may love her young charges as a mother, though they are not of her flesh and blood. In "La Maestra Rural" she compares the rural school-teacher with Christ, saying that the teacher's kingdom, like Christ's, is not of men; she exclaims that the teacher must be pure and glad of heart, that she must be willing to accept misunderstanding and hurt, if necessary, to be a successful teacher of children. This same love of children is also reflected in her poems for children. And along with her love for children she reveals in her poetry, and in her public statements about her career as a teacher and educational administrator, a love for the poor, the unfortunates of the world, which is akin to maternal love.

As a poet Mistral began with the theme of death, following the loss of her beloved, and death recurs in her work throughout her career. Death often appears in the poetry as impurity, or as a process of disintegration. In writing of death, as in writing on other topics, she uses concrete details. Her figures of speech, her descriptions of death, are graphically specific; she seems often to emphasize even a lurid aspect to death.

Life, death, and religion are for the Chilean poet inextricably intertwined, as they are for most poets in the Christian tradition. Religion seems for Gabriela Mistral an emotion, rather than a ritual of faith. She seems to feel that Christianity is the hope of the peoples of the world, not of the individual alone; but it is a Christianity that is neither doctrinal nor conventional. She is reputed to have regarded herself as strongly anticlerical, though very religious. That she evaluated herself correctly as religious, one may guess from poems that are actually prayers or hymns.

In the early poetry of Mistral one finds little lightness or gaiety; she is sad, at least serious, when her tone is not tragic. Her poetic vocabulary is filled with words of suffering, pain; notably, she uses verbs of violence and pain. Her language is suggestive, too, of underlying violence

and turbulence. Even when she writes of nature, it is viewed as the peasant knows it—not a smiling nature, but one from which a living must be wrung.

Mistral's later poetry, as one finds it in *Tala*, published in 1938, is more complex, showing greater maturity of view and craft. Insofar as subject matter is concerned, the reader notes immediately a greater objectivity and a wider scope of subject matter in the later poems. One whole section of *Tala* is called "América" and is devoted to the country that Gabriela Mistral knew and loved. But in the other sections of the volume, too, one finds a wider interest. Her America is a larger land than her native Chile; it is the whole of Latin America, the land of many mountains, a land of varied climates, and a land of many people with long histories. She writes of the Indians of her America, their tragedy, their poverty, and their hopes. In her poems, writing about the Incas, the Mayas, the Quiches, the Quechuans, the Aymará, she displays her love of people, her concern for the poor and the unfortunate. In the later poetry she could write of her own experience as well. The death of her mother, which affected the poet deeply, is the subject of a poem in this volume, as was the death of her beloved a source of earlier poetry.

By 1938 the poet had become conscious of her craft; this fact is borne out by the notes she included with *Tala*. In

these she comments on her poetic vocabulary, justifies her use of certain words, and notes her use of specific rhyme schemes. Her choice of words with a distinctly rural flavor is commented upon. She notes that she is influenced by the popular dialect of her own region and country, as distinct from the language from the Spanish classics.

Among historians of Hispanic-American literature, Gabriela Mistral has been regarded as a woman poet who simply ignored the traditional place of women in her culture and, by so doing, became a great writer and public figure. She has been regarded as a romantic (in the literary sense) rebel against the formality of the literary trends of the 1880's and 1890's, one who began as a poet of disillusion but became a voice of love for the suffering mankind of her time—the children, the mothers, the peasants, the Indians, and the Negroes. Critics have seen in her work such varied influences as the Bible, the poetry of Tagore, the poetry of Amado Nervo, of Mexico, and the poetry of Ruben Darío, of Nicaragua. Her best-known poems are reputed to be her *Canciones de Cuna* (Lullabies) and *Rondas de Niños* (Songs of Children), known and sung throughout South America. Even before she was awarded the Nobel Prize she was heralded and acclaimed as a moral force throughout the South American continent, both as a poet and as a teacher.

THE POETRY OF GARRETT

Author: George Garrett (1929-)

First published: *The Reverend Ghost and Other Poems*, 1957; *The Sleeping Gypsy and Other Poems*, 1958; *Abraham's Knife and Other Poems*, 1961; *For a Bitter Season*, 1967

When a poet has made his mark, sharp and distinctive, on the language of poetry (whether that mark is felt immediately as influence upon his contemporaries or not), he can be said to have succeeded in his craft, to have excelled in his art. Of the younger poets in America who have come into their own or begun their prog-

ress since World War II, few have made that mark. There are, of course, Richard Wilbur and Robert Lowell, both of whom are of the first order, and there are those shaggy poets, the Beats, who made themselves heard collectively if seldom singly. And there are some younger poets, testing their abilities and finding

their strengths, avoiding both the dull drone of the academy or the hysterical howl of the streets of night. Among these young poets is George Garrett, best known perhaps for his novels and short stories, who is a poet of true distinction with a voice clearly and originally his own.

The poems, collected so far in his three books and appearing in journals, were written during and, without being topical and thus temporally restricted, speak for the last twenty years, from 1947 to the present. Garrett is a poet of the cold war years, striving in his verse to understand and accommodate the lost world of heroism and faith, the traditional realm of poetry, to this age of anxiety, shattered hopes, and leering fears. His poetry records a personal journey through the army and a time in Rome, his years in school and after, the growth of his love into a family, and his own growing recognition of his frailty and his mortality in a world in which everything tastes of death and where every skull grins a lewd secret. It is a dark journey, an Augustinian journey through life, fraught with doubts and terrors, lighted by love and a real faith in God and His awesome and awful grandeur, and in the human spirit with its failings and its real achievements.

Garrett's personal odyssey is but a part of his poetry, the mainstream with connecting smaller streams of amazing variety. He has written witty poems of genuine eighteenth century satirical brilliance ("Three from the Academy," "Four Characters in Search of a New Dunciad"); he has evoked the moods and essences of real places ("Fall Landscapes, New England," "In North Carolina," "Crows at Paestum," "Old Slavemarket: St. Augustine, Fla."); he has written poems which approach real people with telling insight ("Congreve," "Matthew Arnold," "Caedmon," "Swift"); and he has re-created larger figures from a real and mythic past ("Tiresias," "Eve," "Abraham's Knife," "Salome"). This va-

riety is evidence of the vitality of the poems, and that vitality, along with Garrett's technical skill, gives the poems, for all their variety, a real unity of vision and manner.

George Garrett's poems, first of all, have a clearly recognizable sound, an uncommon virtue among his contemporaries. They achieve a working fusion between the heightened diction of poetic meditation and the fresh and exciting immediacy of colloquial speech—a living voice, a real meeting of thought and word. His rhythms are subtle and widely varied, at times musically regular and at others wildly free beyond ordinary scan-sion. His images are vivid and functional, seldom drawn for their own sake, always working in their context. But his metaphors are perhaps the most distinctive quality of the texture of his verse; they arise cleanly and crisply from a context of theme. He does not, as is so often the case since Pound and Eliot, make the familiar landscapes and events of this world seem new and significant by giving them metaphorical overtones of man's archetypal dreams, myths, and faiths; rather, he gives those dreams and fading faiths new life and relevance by clothing them in the things of this real and present world, by incarnating idea in fact.

In "Meditation on Romans," a long and very fine poem which is deeply religious without being pietistic, as are all of his overtly Christian poems, Garrett uses his kind of metaphor to great advantage, as when he cries out his appeal directly to Christ, a carpenter, a physician, and a king.

Here the universal is made real in the specific, and the specific is a very real present of nails and dollar bills stated in a language as ordinary as its objects and as new and clean as its juxtapositions are unexpected and startling. It is a poem of spiritual doubt and desire made real in words and images of this world, just as soul itself lives in the flesh of a dying animal.

The matter of George Garrett's poetry

is appropriate to his manner, for in those poems which constitute the mainstream of his work he is a seeker, involved in a long and arduous quest for meaning in the madness of this world, for truth in absurdity, for faith in a time of disbelief and doubt, for that lost age of innocence and heroism and purity. He once defined this quest and his view of that old human dilemma in a preface to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, a book which is in many ways parallel to much of his own work, when he said that "we still cling to the hope that with the exercise of reason and with a change of heart we may yet have a new birth of history and recover a lost and shining world that haunts our deepest dreams."

The heroes of the quest are many, for Garrett is no pure romantic who sees only self in everything and describes the world in terms of self. There are true heroes in the ancient sense, the few who have risked everything that they can lose, as he says in "A Bargain"; there are the professionals, those who make their way in the world simply by doing their jobs and who praise God in pragmatic action; and there are the possessed, the saints and sinners alike who are raped by God's love into vision and purity. The practical buzzard, ugly and beautiful at once, comes down to this world's business in "Buzzard"; the itinerant and lusty preacher of "Holy Roller" is a con man and a sinner, but he is of the chosen of God.

The most immediate and real of his heroes is the bearer of saving grace in this life, the lover. In his poem "Eve," Garrett's wounded Adam is healed only by Eve, a part of himself torn apart, whose hand he takes for all time, finite and infinite. Garrett's love poems are rich with idea but richer still with a purity of un-

abashed feeling which is rare in our self-conscious and cynical time. The last stanza of "Proposition" gives at least a taste of the quality of his love poetry, but even love can fail in the poems as in the world. Garrett's view of things is a dark one, a world of fists and failures, pains of an aging flesh and a corrupted spirit. Lost Eden is long gone, but as long as the vision remains and the artist can give it even ephemeral reality, then that lost purity exists. In his long and surely major poem, "Salome," he brings together the fallen man and the artist in that doomed dancer's flesh. She speaks her dreams and her horrors, of the blank and naked face of truth and that saving vision.

Possessed of a dark vision but not one which has surrendered to despair, often bitter, often sorely wounded, George Garrett's hero strives in this world of transforming figures, sustained by his honest awareness of that world, his artistic vision of a purer world of spirit, and his ability to love and be loved. This is a hero of our time, familiar to us all in life and in art, but seldom figured in poetry with such wisdom and such skill. With a language as lively and as startling as a string of firecrackers, Garrett gives us ourselves and our old dreams made new.

Perhaps the best conclusion to any examination of his poetry is the closing of his poem "For My Sons" in which idea and language are formed, in a way most typical of the best of his work, to shape a litany of the world's ancient wisdom, echoes of Old Testament knowledge and precept. Here we read the words of a wise and humble man, of an honest and skilled artist whose work is still very much in progress.

THE POETRY OF GASCOIGNE

Author: George Gascoigne (1535-1577)

Principal published works: *A Hundred Sundrie Flowres Bound Up in One Small Poste*, 1573; *Posies of George Gascoigne*, 1575; *The Steele Glas*, *A Satire*, 1576; *Complaynt of Phylomene*, 1576; "The Grief of Joye," 1577

From the time *A Hundred Sundrie Flowres Bound Up in One Small Posie* was published in 1573, until the twentieth century, most readers have taken the prefatory letters to the volume at face value and believed that George Gascoigne was responsible for only a few of the works included; but now G. T. Prouty has proved beyond doubt that Gascoigne was responsible for all of them. This unquestioning acceptance in Gascoigne's time was fortunate for him: when the volume first came out, he was in Holland fighting for his country, and he was not the only one blamed in the severe attack on the work. Yet, in 1575, when Gascoigne had had time to go over the volume and revise it somewhat, he brought out a new edition in which he acknowledged authorship of the previous volume, openly repented what he had done, and vowed that he would write in the future only works which would have a definite positive influence on the nation. Then he showed how he had revised the volume and how even it could be used for a good purpose. He was equally unsuccessful in this attempt at revision, but he continued to pursue a career in writing. Since the *A Hundred Sundrie Flowres* and *Posies* contain essentially the same material, they may be considered together.

The volumes can be broken down into three main groups: the drama, the fiction, and the poetry. In the drama section are two plays translated into English—the Greek tragedy *Jocasta*, by Euripides and the Italian comedy, *I suppositi*, by Ariosto. The fictional section contains "The Adventures of Master F. J."; in the later edition this work is considerably revised and is called a translation of a work by an unknown Italian writer, Bartello. In still a later work, Gascoigne reveals that he himself is Bartello.

Gascoigne used another method of division in *Posies*. He divided his material into sections which he called "Flowres, Hearbes, and Weedes." He justifies this classification by saying, "I terme

some Floures, bycause being indeed invented upon a verie light occasion, they had yet in them some rare invention and Methode before not commonly used." The herbs are "more profitable than pleasant," and in this section he includes *I suppositi* and *Jocasta*. The value of the "Weedes" may be questionable, but none is "so vile or stinking but that it hath in it some vertue if it be rightly handled." As one might expect, it is in this section that Gascoigne places "The Adventures of Master F. J."

Various poems are scattered throughout Gascoigne's three sections. The first poem is typical of the age in the way it is "The Anatomye of a Lover." This poem is typical of the age in the way it catalogues the physical features of the lover, not the loved one. Starting at the top of the head with "unkempt lockes" and progressing down through the body all the way to the feet, Gascoigne shows what happens to one snared by love. The poem is so typical that a certain humorous tone creeps in and hints that Gascoigne is actually parodying the conceit instead of copying it. This tone of humor continues in the next poem, "The Arraignment of a Lover." Love was a stable topic during this Elizabethan period, and Gascoigne used it over and over in his poems. These titles are typical: "The Passion of a Lover," "The Divorce of a Lover," "The Lamentation of a Lover," and "The Lullabie of a Lover."

A paraphrase of "The Lullabie of a Lover" might go like this: As women sing to quiet the child, so do I sing, for I have many children to quiet. First, silence my youth for I am now an aging man. Next, rest my eyes; I have wandered too much for pleasures of the flesh. Third, let my passion rest and be ruled by reason for a change. Fourth, let my little "Robin" rest and let "lust relent." Thus may my whole body rest. Now that pleasures are past, welcome pain.

"The Lamentation of a Lover" follows the same general theme. Gascoigne is saying that once he enjoyed many pleasures,

but since he is no longer able to enjoy them, his sadness is double because he knows what once was and can no longer be.

One of the longer poems in "Flowers" is "Dan Bartholmew of Bathe," a verse narrative. This poem is actually a linking together of verses written at various times by putting them in a narrative framework, rather than a group of verses written in chronological order. The poem did not appear in its completed form in *A Hundred Sundrie Flowres*. Because of its concern with a single love affair, some consider the poem to be a forerunner of the sonnet sequence. The story is of Dan Bartholmew and his love for Ferenda Natura. Not until he is middle-aged does the hero fall in love, but when he does, his passion is so great that even when his love proves faithless he cannot forget her. The only way he can soothe his torment is by telling his sad story. In the end, Ferenda writes a letter in her own blood, begging forgiveness, which Bartholmew quickly grants, even though he suspects his beloved Ferenda will soon be searching for a new lover.

Another long poem appearing in the "Flowers" section of *Posies* is "The Frutes of Warre," which has the subtitle "Dulce Bellum Inexpertis." In it is found in verse form the story of Gascoigne's war experiences in Holland. His discussion of the nature of war can be summed up in his definition of war: "I say that warre is even the scourge of God,/Tormenting such as dwell in princelie plight."

After the "Flowers" comes a section of "Herbs." First in this section are the translated plays, and after these are some eighteen short poems on such various subjects as reconciliation, friendship, virtue, and, of course, love. In "Gascoigne's Woodmanship," the poet is reviewing the various events in his life for his patron, Lord Grey of Wilton. In the form of dialogue, Gascoigne answers the question of why he always misses the mark with his bow, by showing that he has always

missed the mark; he has missed as student, lawyer, courtier, and soldier:

For prooffe he beares the note of follie
now,
Who shotte sometimes to hit Philosophie,
And aske you why?

Next that, he shot to be a man of lawe,

Yet in the end, he proved but a dawe,

From thence he shotte to catch a courtly
grace,

And thought even there to wield the
world at will,

But now behold what marke the man
doth find,

He shootes to be a souldier in his age,

Thus he has failed in each attempt, yet he still has hopes of being a successful professional writer.

Still more short poems appear in the section called "Weeds," including "The Frute of Fetters," "The Greene Knights Farewell to Fansie," and "The Praise of Phillip Sparrowe." This last poem shows the Gascoigne must have known John Skelton. One stanza should be sufficient to show the similarities:

And yet beside all this good sport
My Phillip can both sing and daunce:
With new found toyes of sundry sort,
My Phillip can both pricke and
praunce:

As if you saye but fend cut phippe,
Lord how the peat will turne and
skippe.

After witnessing the acceptance, or rather, the refusal of acceptance of the revised *Posies*, Gascoigne realized that the people could not believe that his repentance was sincere; he resolved "to bestow [his] time and talent in matters both serious and moral" in order to convince them of his sincerity and thus make amends for the lost time of his misspent youth.

With this purpose in mind he published, in April, 1576, *The Steele Glas*, *A Satire*, and dedicated it to Lord Grey of Wilton. Schelling calls it the "first original composition in blank verse." The design is typical of its age, and it is similar to *A Mirror for Magistrates*. Gascoigne proposes to show the society as a whole what it really is, hoping that when the people see themselves in all their ugliness they will change.

The poem begins with the allegorical story of the birth of Satira and Poesy, as the children of Plain Dealing and Simplicity. This story closely parallels that of Philomene, which Gascoigne was finishing about this time. Nevertheless, Poesy is married to Vain Delight; and later, when Satira goes to visit her wedded sister, she is ravished and consequently has her tongue cut out by Vain Delight with the Razor of Restraint. But, like Philomene, Satira's song is not over for "with the stumps of my reprovéd tong,/I may sometimes, Reprovers deeds reprove,/And sing a verse, to make them see themselves."

The satire that Gascoigne has to sing is not a personal vendetta; it is of a more general nature and is directed against the whole social order, not individuals. Typical of the poetry of his day, Gascoigne explains with much detail every aspect of his scheme. He is following the legacy of the Latin satirist Lucilius "who at his death, bequeathed the christal glasses,/To such a love, to seeme but not to be,/And unto those, that love to see themselves,/How foule or fayre, soever that they are,/He gan bequeath, a glass of trustie Steele." Thus it is from the father of Roman satire that Gascoigne gets the name for this satirical poem.

Like a true reformer, Gascoigne first holds up this glass of steel to himself to show the people that he is not now what he once was. He is trying to demonstrate to his countrymen that he has repented for his reckless youth and is now trying to make amends for his earlier days. "I desire

to see myself in deed,/Not what I would, but what I am or should."

The next reflection to appear in the steel glass is that of the ideal commonwealth, that type of commonwealth set forth by Solon and Lycurgus. While the crystal glass might reflect rich towns and a rule by just law, the steel glass shows not a commonwealth but a "common woe." This woe can be prevented by the four estates of king, knight, peasant, and priest. Gascoigne then attacks each of these four estates at length, showing what they are doing and should not be, and what they are not doing but should be.

While discussing the second estate, that of the knights, Gascoigne goes into the subdivision of the soldiers and shows that they, the stoic defenders of the kingdom, are but drunken, cruel, and boasting lechers. If the reflection of the soldiers seems to be more vivid than some of the other reflections, the reason is that Gascoigne can recall his own experiences in this profession.

Nor does Gascoigne stop with only the four estates; he expands his reflection mirror to include some of the middle class, the merchants, the lawyers, and others. Yet he continues to use the same method of showing the vices of the present day by comparing them to those of ancient days when the same occasion brought forth virtue.

In his attack on the clergy, Gascoigne follows the tradition by implying their vices, not stating them explicitly. He praises the priests of another day, saying they were not proud, gluttonous, envious, lustful, wrathful, slothful, or avaricious. It is in the lowly plowman that there exists a spirit of truth and there will be a place in heaven for this man, says Gascoigne, for he is truly humble; because he has no interest in seeming, but only in being he will enter heaven "before the shaven crownes" even though "he stink for sweat."

In the *Complaynt of Phylomene*, com-

panion piece published with *The Steele Glas*, Gascoigne turns an exercise of poetic paraphrase into a didactic poem on the evil of lust. He first started working on the piece, as he states in his introductory letter, while in a carriage returning from Chelmsford and on his way to London; but a sudden cloudburst interrupted his work, and he did not return to it until April of 1575, when he was working on *The Steele Glas*. The legend of Philomene was a commonplace to the schoolboys of Elizabethan England. Gascoigne probably used the Latin version of the myth as told by Ovid, and probably in an edition which had some useful notes, such as he may have used as a student.

The Ovidian version tells how Pandion gives his elder daughter, Progne, in marriage to Tereus, King of Thrace. After the wedding rites, Progne returns with Tereus; some time passes and Progne desires to see her sister. Finally she persuades Tereus to go to Athens and ask for permission to take Philomene to Thrace for a visit with Progne. While Tereus is persuading Pandion to allow the visit, he is overcome by the charm and beauty of Philomene, and his lust for her makes his plea so eloquent that Pandion relents and gives his permission.

Returning to Thrace, Tereus takes Philomene to a deserted stable, rapes her, and cuts out her tongue. Tereus then tells Progne that Philomene is dead. Twelve years pass while Philomene remains a prisoner in the sheepcote. Finally she decides how to let her sister know what has happened. She sews a garment, stitching into it the story of her rape, and gives it to a servant to deliver to the queen. When Progne finds out what has truly happened to her sister, she silently plots revenge. During the rites of Bacchus, she rescues Philomene, disguising her in the dress of the festival. While Progne is trying to decide the best way to revenge the wrong of her husband, her son, Itys, comes in. His close resemblance

to his father helps Progne make up her mind. Love and devotion for her sister overcame her love for her own son. She kills him, cuts him into small pieces, cooks him, and serves up the dish to Tereus. After the meal, when Tereus calls for his son, Progne can keep quiet no longer. "The thing thou seekst (ô wretch quoth she)/Within thee doth abide." Tereus does not believe her and in searching for his son, comes upon Philomene who flings the head of Itys at Tereus.

Tereus enraged seeks revenge, but before he can catch the Greek sisters the gods intervene and change all the family into birds. The elder sister

A Swallowe was assignde,
And builds in smokey chimney toppes
And flies against the winde.

The king him selfe, condemnde
A Lapwing for to be,
Who for his yong ones cries alwais,
Yet never can them see.

Itys is changed into a pheasant. Philomene becomes a nightingale, and as such she can sing her song and please the ears of man, but from fear of force, she sings only at night.

To tell this story, paraphrased from Ovid, Gascoigne uses the framing device of a dream in which the goddess of just revenge, Nemesis, appears to him and tells the tale. Then she interprets the meaning of the nightingale's song: "And for hir foremost note,/Tereu, Tereu, doth sing,/Complaining stil uppon the name/Of that false Thracian king." The second note of the nightingale's song is "phy." This is interpreted as disdain for everything. "Phy filthy lecher . . . Phy coward phy . . . Phy monster." The nightingale's third note is "Jug, Jug, Jug." Not even Nemesis is sure of the meaning of this part of the song. She conjectures that it may be the Latin for cutthroat or murderer, or possibly a Latin word for the symbol of humiliation. Eric

Partridge, gives another possible interpretation of the word. The fourth and final note of the nightingale's song is "Némesis":

She calles on *Némesis*
And *Némesis* am I,
The Goddesse of al just revenge,
Who lets no blame go by.

With this interpretation of the song, the dream ends and Gascoigne then interprets the meaning of the dream. Through this final interpretation the didactic nature of the whole work is revealed. First, Gascoigne sums up the lesson to be learned in two lines: "I seeme to see [my Lord] that lechers lust,/Procures the plague, and vengauce of the highest. . . ." He then treats these themes separately and much more extensively. He shows how yielding to an unhealthy desire leads to the suffering of the innocent, sometimes to the third and fourth generations. And he shows that no sin goes unpunished, that God sees all sins, and that all eventually receive their just reward, as did Progne and Tereus.

In closing, Gascoigne reminds his Patron that the poet's days of youthful lust are over; if he is ever tempted again, he needs only to be reminded of the story of Philomene.

Gascoigne's last song was intended to be a gift to the queen, and he thought an imitation of Petrarch would be both pleasing and suitable for the occasion. The poem, "The Grief of Joye," published in January, 1577, deals with the transience of bodily pleasures and the inevitability of death. It is divided into four songs. The first is called "The Greeves or Discomodities of Lustie Youth." The second is a discourse on "The Vanities of Bewtie." The third reveals "the faults of force and strength," and the fourth is concerned with "the vanities of activyties." All four are written in rhyme royal.

As in most of his work, Gascoigne interjects his own experiences into the poem. While he is pointing out the van-

ity of delight in material things, he is at the same time mourning the passage of such delights. In the song on youth he says, "Trew joye cannot, in triffleng toyes consist/Nor happiness in joyes which soon decaie/Then looke on yowthe, and marke it he that list/Somtymes both borne and buried in a daye./Yea though he it should, contynew [green] alwaie,/I cannot finde, what joy therein doth grow,/Which is not staynd, with under-twiggs of wo."

In the second song, "The Vanities of Bewtie," Gascoigne pays tribute to the queen:

This is the *Queene* whose onely looke
subdewed,
Her prowdest foes, withowten speare
or sheeld
This is the *Queene*, whome never eye
yet viewed,
But streight the hart, was forst thereby
to yeelde
This *Queene* it is, who (had she sat
in feeld,
When *Paris* judged, that *Venus* bare
the bell.)
The prize were hers, for she deserves
it well.

He then catalogues a procession of other ladies of the court he had known; and since the allusions to them are sometimes vague, he is careful to put their initials in the margin. Then he speaks of those who do not have true beauty yet think they do and thus deceive themselves. "They strive to seeme, but never care to be." This line is certainly an echo from *The Steele Glas*.

In his third song of the poem, that on strength, Gascoigne shows that if women are vain because of their beauty, then man is vain because of his strength. In the final song he lists many activities that are considered pleasures and shows the folly of these activities. Among the activities are music, dancing, wrestling, and riding.

The poem gets its name, according to the poet, from the fact that, in essence,

all joys are transient. Death is not only always very close; it is always drawing closer. And it was in the year that Gas-

coigne presented this poem to the queen that he met his death.

THE POETRY OF GAUTIER

Author: Théophile Gautier (1811-1872)

First published: *Poésies*, 1830 (*Poems*); *Albertus*, 1833; *La Comédie de la mort*, 1838 (*The Comedy of Death*); *España*, 1845; *Émaux et camées*, 1852 (*Enamels and Cameos*)

Théophile Gautier's poetry forms the transition between Romanticism and the Parnassus school in France. As a young man, Gautier was a prominent member of the group surrounding Victor Hugo in the battle of *Hernani*. Later, however, though he did not formally renounce his support of Romanticism, his name was to become associated with the doctrine of Art for Art's sake, and it is especially in connection with his body of ideas that his name is remembered.

Gautier's earliest poetry was collected into a volume entitled, simply, *Poésies*, first published in 1830. A pronounced taste for the Middle Ages, a love of lonely places, an impression of alienation, all traditional sources of inspiration for the Romantic poets, find a place in this collection, which is remarkable mainly for its lack of originality.

"Albertus, or the Soul and Sin," a long narrative poem describing a young painter's fatal infatuation with a witch, appeared in 1833. This work is little read today and indeed has little to recommend it. Worthy of note, however, is Gautier's use of the stock-in-trade of the somewhat unwholesome lesser Romantic writers: slugs and toads, phantoms and vampires all have their place in this work.

"La Comédie de la mort," a long poem, which came out in 1838, is in two parts. In the first, titled "Life in Death" and involving a dialogue in a graveyard between a worm and a corpse, the poet's intention to shock his reader is obvious. In the second part, "Death in Life," Gautier again tends to reveal the grotesque if superficial side of his Romanticism. Yet here the intensity with which the poet

insists that death overshadows all of life would seem to suggest in Gautier a deep-seated pessimism with which he has not always been credited. This impression is reinforced by several pieces in his *Poésies diverses*.

Poésies diverses is the title of a collection of poems which appeared in one volume with *La Comédie de la mort*. Especially worthy of mention is a short piece called "La Caravane." Gautier develops beautifully the symbol of a caravan crossing the Sahara as suggestive of mankind in the world. The only oasis, the only resting place, claims the poet, is the graveyard; this idea is evoked in the simplest of terms:

. . . a wood of cypresses strewn with
white stones.

However, not all of the poems in this collection are pessimistic. "Chinoiserie" ("Chinese Fantasy") illustrates Gautier's taste for distant lands and things exotic. The poet affirms that his love goes out not to Shakespeare's Juliet, nor to Dante's Beatrice, nor yet to Petrarch's Laura. Rather, he loves a girl in China who lives in a tower of porcelain:

The one I love, at present, is in China;
She is living with her old parents,
In a tower of fine porcelain,
At the Yellow River, where the cor-
morants are. . . .

In no way profound, "Chinoiserie" is a delightful piece which has been set to music. It is worth remarking that even at this relatively early stage in his development, Gautier could offer his dream vision in a precise, finely executed form.

In 1840, Gautier went to Spain and stayed there for six months. The first edition of *España* appeared in 1845; in it the reader has the impression that the starkness and acute relief of the Spanish landscape and the paintings in the art galleries of Spain appealed to, and even sharpened, Gautier's eye.

In "Ribeira" and "A Zurburan," two poems in *España* which are written in *terza rima*, Gautier reveals a remarkable talent for giving a life in verse to the paintings of the two Spanish masters. Moreover, in trying to understand Ribeira's love of ugliness, and the cruelty and violence of Zurburan's studies of early Christian martyrs, Gautier makes his art criticism into a powerful art form in its own right. Elsewhere in this edition, Gautier's approach to his art is perhaps more characteristic of the plastic arts than of poetry. In "Le Pin des Landes," for example, it is the scene viewed which calls to mind the symbol, whereas more commonly a poet will seek out a symbol to illustrate or clothe an idea.

Gautier describes how in the Landes, an area of southwest France, the only tree to be seen is the pine, with a gash in its side, to allow its resin to drip into a bowl. He develops the symbolic value of the tree beautifully; the poet, standing upright and alone, is like the tree. For the poet is cut off from others by his superiority and their jealousy. When he is unhurt, he keeps his treasure, Gautier claims; he needs a deep wound in his heart to make him release his works, his golden tears:

Without regretting its blood that flows
drop by drop,
The pine pours out its balsam and its
frothing sap,
And still it stands upright by the side
of the road,
Like a wounded soldier, who wishes to
die on his feet.

The poet is thus in the wastes of the
world;
While he is unwounded, he keeps his
treasure.

He must have a deep gash pon his
heart

To release his verses, these divine,
golden tears!

"Dans la Sierra" which is also in *España*, involves a landscape as a symbol, too. Here Gautier, inspired by the arid mountains of Spain, insists that he prefers them to the fertile plains. The cult of beauty for its own sake, suggested in this poem, was to be worked up into a whole new poetic doctrine by Gautier.

Emaux et camées was first published in 1852. This collection, to which additions were made in the five new editions until 1872, marks a major development in his poetry; it is the collection for which Gautier as a poet is best remembered, that which illustrates his doctrine of Art for Art's sake.

In order to understand this doctrine, it is worth recalling that, about 1930, writers were being urged to participate in the general effort toward social progress. As early as 1832, in the preface to his *Poésies*, Gautier declared that the value of art lay in its beauty and not its usefulness: it was not the artist's business to exercise an influence on the crowd. "In general," he wrote, "as soon as a thing becomes useful, it ceases to be beautiful." Art, he claimed, was a luxury, offered to a small, elite public capable of understanding it. In the preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, moreover, Gautier went on to say that only that which serves no purpose is beautiful. In an article in *L'Artiste* he insisted that the artist's sole aim was to capture beauty.

While it is dangerous to seek an explanation of Gautier's poetic doctrine in his life, two possible influences might be considered. In the first place, it should not be forgotten that if the subordination of idea to form brings to mind the plastic arts, Gautier did in fact start his career as a painter. In addition, it is worth mentioning that he earned his living as a journalist, drama critic, and art critic at a time when the writer risked becoming a commodity, the prey of unscrupulous edi-

tors and publishers. He was only too aware of the difficulties a writer faced in trying to retain his integrity.

On the other hand, Gautier had lived too close to the Romantic movement and was too much of a critic not to see that in trying to follow all the movements of their soul, the Romantics had frequently sacrificed accuracy for effect; he was aware that his companions had on occasion been guilty of expressing more than they had to say. It is against this background that one must understand the doctrine of Art for Art's sake.

In *Émaux et Camées* one is witness to an attempt to return to precision and clarity, even at the expense of subject matter. The title of the collection is of course significant; the poems grouped under it are highly polished, exquisitely crafted pieces. The tone of the edition is set by the preface. Here Gautier states that just as Goethe at Weimar cut himself off from the world to write, so he, Gautier, has disregarded the storms lashing his windows and has written *Émaux et camées*.

If Gautier's aim in poetry was now beauty, he tells how the poet might achieve this effect in a poem written in 1857 and added as a conclusion to *Émaux et camées*. In "L'Art," Gautier claims that like painting or sculpture, poetry is both an art and a skill to be learned. The poet, a craftsman, must have a firm grip on all the resources of the language. If he succeeds in overcoming all the problems of rhyme and syntax and vocabulary, while creating no artificial obstacles, the work of art will resist the ravages of time as no other human creation can:

All things pass on.—Robust art
Alone possesses eternity;
The bust
Survives the city.
The very gods die,
But verse, sovereign,
Remains
Stronger than the sword

In this collection Gautier's extreme attachment to form results in carefully ex-

cuted, sophisticated poetry, which is generally more impersonal than anything he had previously done. On the other hand the subject matter is often very slight: "Study of Hands," "To a Red Gown," and "The Tea-Rose" are representative titles.

In *España*, especially, Gautier had already attempted artistic transpositions, trying to achieve or reproduce in verse the effect obtained by a work of art in another medium. In *Émaux et camées* such attempts become more ambitious. In "Variations on the Carnival of Venice," for example, the poet offers a series of four pieces in which the point of departure is a musical phrase from a Venetian song. In rhythmic, colorful verse, Gautier creates a picture of Venice as he imagines it once was.

In "Symphony in White Major," Gautier again attempts an artistic transformation, showing all the nuances and associations of white. This is perhaps a fine display of virtuosity, but there is little development within the poem, and the question arises whether poetry is in fact a suitable medium for such an exercise.

The appeal of *Émaux et camées* is by its very nature limited. In trying to banish himself from his work, Gautier is on occasion guilty of creating "cold" poetry. By shutting himself off from the world, he severely restricts his choice of subjects. It might be argued, moreover, that Gautier's choice of art for its own sake is made at the expense of content—that beauty of form is not enough.

It must be recognized that the "impersonal" poetry of the Parnassus owed much to Gautier, while his artistic transpositions were of great consequence for Baudelaire and the Symbolists. Moreover, if Gautier's creative talents were limited, he did, nonetheless, by his respect for his calling and for the word, renew a tradition which began with Malherbe. Baudelaire no doubt lavished excessive praise on Gautier, but in writing that Gautier was a poet for whom the inexpressible did not exist he was probably paying his compatriot a compliment he merited.

THE POETRY OF GOLDSMITH

Author: Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)

First published: *The Traveller*, 1764; *The Deserted Village*, 1770

Oliver Goldsmith, the little Irish writer and sometimes physician who was the friend of Samuel Johnson and Joshua Reynolds and the butt of countless rude jokes from the pen of James Boswell, tried his hand at almost every literary genre popular in his time. His novel, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, his domestic comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and his gently satirical essays, the *Citizen of the World*, have made a lasting niche for him in English literary history. He was also a creditable minor poet, with two long reflective poems, several charming songs, satirical lyrics, a literary ballad, and even the libretto for an oratorio to his credit. He was not an original poet, but he could capture the essence of the techniques of others and make them his own, moralizing like Johnson or satirizing like Swift.

Goldsmith's best poetic works are unquestionably *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, long didactic, reflective poems that show their author's sensitive awareness of the pleasures and pains of the life of the common man. In the first of the two poems Goldsmith speaks as one who wanders over the continent of Europe, rejoicing that the world has been laid open for his pleasures. Yet he feels the pains of this world, too:

Yet oft a sigh prevails, and sorrows fall,
To see the hoard of human bliss so small;
And oft I wish, amidst the scene, to find
Some spot to real happiness consign'd,
Where my worn soul, each wand'ring
hope at rest,
May gather bliss to see my fellows
bless'd.

He surveys the countries he knows, hoping to find this happiness in one of them, but he sees grave faults in each. Italy, bountifully endowed by nature, suffers through the indolence and sensuality of her people:

As in those domes, where Caesars once
bore sway,
Defac'd by time and tottering in decay,
There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant builds his
shed.

The sturdy Swiss peasants are happy with their lot, content with the barest necessities; but their pleasures, as well as their desires, are few. In sharp contrast to their stern existence is the gay life of the French, whom Goldsmith finds slaves to their own desires for flattery and frivolity:

Here vanity assumes her pert grimace,
And trims her robes of frieze with
copper lace;
Here beggar pride defrauds her daily
cheer,
To boast one splendid banquet once a
year.

The industrious Dutch have created a prosperous nation out of the sea, yet brought elements of "craft and fraud," even slavery, into their lives with their undue reliance on commerce:

At gold's superior charms all freedom
flies,
The needy sell it, and the rich man
buys.

The traveler turns his attention finally to England, where he sees the proud desire for independence and the love of liberty sowing the seeds of destruction; this quest for freedom breaks down ties of family and class, and men turn on one another:

Here, by the bonds of nature feebly
held,
Minds combat minds, repelling and re-
pell'd;
Ferments arise, imprison'd factions roar,
Repress'd ambition struggles round her
shore,
Till, over-wrought, the general system
feels
Its motions stop, or frenzy fire the
wheels.

As this chaos grows, men are enslaved by avarice, and all learning and the arts decline. Goldsmith protests with special passion the eviction of villagers by their landlords, noblemen seeking to enlarge their estates or their grazing land. This problem was especially critical in Goldsmith's native Ireland, and he speaks of it at much greater length in *The Deserted Village*.

The final passage of *The Traveller*, which is said to have been written partly by Samuel Johnson, gives a new turn to Goldsmith's central idea. Ultimately, the poem concludes, man's happiness rest with himself:

How small, of all that human hearts
endure,
That part which laws or kings can
cause or cure!
Still to ourselves in every place con-
sign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find.

The Deserted Village, like *The Traveller* written in the heroic couplet so popular in the eighteenth century, is generally considered Goldsmith's best poem. His description of the idyllic life in the village of Auburn before disaster, in the form of a greedy landlord, struck it, has great appeal, especially in the brief vignettes of the vicar and the schoolmaster. Goldsmith's interest in detail of nature and in the lot of the common man ally him rather with the poets of the next generation than with his neoclassical contemporaries.

The Deserted Village is a personal meditation; its form gives the author freedom to comment bitterly on the harm that trade has wrought on the English people and to lament that he will never fulfill his lifelong dream of spending his last years in Auburn, listening to the night noises of animals, children, and young lovers. He describes the former gaiety of the village when children danced, played games, and whispered under the hawthorn bushes, then contrasts the present scene:

No more thy glassy brook reflects the
day,
But, chok'd with sedges, works its
weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its
nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing
flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried
cries.

Goldsmith then pictures himself strolling around the deserted town; the ruins of the vicarage remind him of the saintly man who once inhabited it, dispensing charity to every passing beggar, watching benevolently over the children in his parish, and dwelling always half in Heaven. Farther along was the home of the schoolmaster, a stern yet kind man, deeply devoted to learning, and a local celebrity:

While words of learned length and
thund'ring sound
Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd
around;
And still they gaz'd, and still the
wonder grew
That one small head could carry all
he knew.

The remainder of the poem emphasizes Goldsmith's sense of loss in the destruction of the village with its "simple blessings" and "spontaneous joys." He is highly indignant at the wealthy, who let their horses and hounds inhabit the former homes and lands of the villagers. The poor find no refuge in the city, where they see wealth they cannot share, where the lost village maiden starves in the streets "near her betrayer's door." The unhappy alternative is to travel west to the new world, to face "the various terrors of that horrid shore." The destruction of the villages seems to Goldsmith the first step in the degeneration of the whole country. With the villagers depart the "rural virtues," "contented toil, and hospitable care, and kind connubial tenderness . . . and piety . . . and steady loyalty, and faithful love." Poetry, too,

will depart, and Goldsmith implores her to flourish in other lands:

Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of th' inclement
clime;
Aid slighted truth; with thy persuasive
strain
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of
gain . . .
That trade's proud empire hastes to
swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole
away.

Goldsmith was not always the serious moralist; his clever lyrics are kin to those of the Cavalier poets and the Restoration dramatists, generally hinging on a witty conclusion for their effect. One poem, "The Gift," begins:

Say, cruel Iris, pretty rake,
Dear mercenary beauty,
What annual offering shall I make
Expressive of my duty?

After considering and rejecting various possibilities, his heart, gems, or gold, he concludes:

I'll give thee—ah! too charming maid,
I'll give thee—to the devil.

The poet skillfully and openly imitated the galloping tetrameter couplets, the absurd rhymes, and the sense of man's grotesqueness that characterize much of the poetry of Jonathan Swift. In "The Logicians Refuted," Goldsmith argues that man is basically irrational, in spite of philosophers' statements to the contrary. The instinct of the beasts is better:

Who ever knew an honest brute
At law his neighbor prosecute . . .

No politics disturb their mind;
They eat their meals, and take their
sport
Nor know who's in or out at court.

"The Double Transformation," the tale of a marriage between a country scholar and a London belle, is reminiscent of both Swift and Pope in its de-

scription of the lady, whose beauty was all artifice, "powder, shreds, or lace." Unlike his more cynical predecessors, however, Goldsmith provides a happy ending. The lady is stricken with smallpox, loses her numerous beaux, and contents herself with trying to please her husband:

Jack soon was dazzl'd to behold
Her present face surpass the old;
With modesty her cheeks are dy'd,
Humility displaces pride . . .

No more presuming on her sway,
She learns good-nature every day;
Serenely gay, and strict in duty,
Jack finds his wife a perfect beauty,

"Edwin and Angelina" reveals still another side of Goldsmith's interests; it is modeled on the medieval folk ballad and again foreshadows the work of the Romantic period. It is not an exceptionally good ballad; its diction is too artificial to carry the immediate human appeal of the folk lyrics, but it is an interesting foretaste of things to come. The narrative is simple. A youthful traveler, dressed as a boy, takes refuge at a hermit's cell and confesses to him that she is really Lady Angelina, who has left home to search for the worthy lover she scorned and drove away. Now she fears his death. Inevitably, the hermit proves to be the lost Edwin, and the lovers are happily reunited:

"No, never from this hour to part,
We'll live and love so true;
The sigh that rends thy constant heart
Shall break thy Edwin's too."

Perhaps the most familiar of Goldsmith's poems is the song from the *Vicar of Wakefield*, which begins:

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy?
What art can wash her guilt away?

The simple language of this lyric shows Goldsmith's natural poetic talent to far greater advantage than the lofty rhetoric

of "Edwin and Angelina" or of the choral pieces.

The *Threnodia Augustalis*, a memorial poem for the Princess Dowager of Wales, falls into the genre of choral odes, best represented by Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*. Like most of the poems addressed to royal personages, it is full of hyperbole:

Bless'd spirit, thou, whose fame, just
born to bloom
Shall spread and flourish from the
tomb,
How hast thou left mankind for
Heaven!

The poem is divided into solo and choral parts, with sharp changes in mood, ranging from grief and terror to quiet acceptance of death. The second part of the ode pictures pilgrims coming to Augusta's tomb, which is to be a haven for Faith, Religion, and Virtue. Somehow Goldsmith's sense of poetic decorum prevents this effusive tribute from becoming ludicrous.

The Captivity, the libretto for an oratoria, is based on the Biblical account of the Babylonian captivity, with Israelite prophets, Chaldean priests, and women of both nations as the principal speakers. Goldsmith skillfully varies his verse forms

for recitatives and arias, and the work ranks creditably beside others of the same genre, though it is by no means the poet's best effort.

It is, perhaps, remarkable that these choral pieces are even readable. Fortunately, Goldsmith's reputation does not rest on them. Far more natural to his talents were the humorous verses that make up a large part of his collected poetry. Typical is his "Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog," with its surprise conclusion:

The man recover'd of the bite—
The dog it was that died.

"Retaliation" is a selection of portraits of his circle in London, Johnson, Reynolds, Edmund Burke, David Garrick, and "magnanimous Goldsmith, a gooseberry fool."

No one claims real greatness for Goldsmith's poetry, but his work still gives pleasure to his readers. His interests were as wide as the scope of eighteenth century poetry, and he simultaneously reveals the neoclassicist's interest in satire, urban society, moral generalizations, and polished verse and the Romantic poet's concern for the countryside, the common man, nature, and simplicity of expression.

THE POETRY OF GRAVES

Author: Robert Graves (1895-)

First published: *Over the Brazier*, 1916; *Fairies and Fusiliers*, 1917; *Country Sentiment*, 1920; *The Pier Glass*, 1921; *Whipperginny*, 1923; *Mock Beggar Hall*, 1924; *Welchman's Hose*, 1925; *The Marmosite's Miscellany*, 1925; *Poems*: 1914-1926, 1927; *Poems*: 1929, 1929; *Poems*: 1926-1930, 1931; *Collected Poems*, 1938; *No More Ghosts*, 1940; *Poems*: 1938-1945, 1946; *Collected Poems*: 1914-1947, 1948; *Poems and Satires*, 1951; *Collected Poems*, 1955; *Collected Poems*, 1959; *More Poems*, 1961; *The Penny Fiddle*, 1962; *New Poems*, 1963; *Man Does, Woman Is*, 1964

Like the weather, the reputations of even the best poets are subject to change, and the middle years of our century have revealed in a somewhat different light of appraisal and judgment a group of writers whose places, only a short time back as literary generations are measured, seemed fixed and final in the critical

canon.

The reason for this change in poetic climate is not hard to determine. Twenty-five years ago the air was expectant with the promise of a bright new day in English poetry. Yeats had achieved the full stature of his later period. Eliot had taken an affirmative stand in *Ash Wednesday*

and was at work on his *Four Quartets*. Pound had broken a trail into new terrains of history and art. Auden and others of his generation were stripping drabness and false sentiment from the paraphernalia of ordinary life, bringing witty new insights and values to the contemporary experience. Dylan Thomas had already brought his passionate sensibility to bear on the joined inner and outer worlds and was hymning his findings with full-throated orchestration. All this has now changed, however, for the anticipated new day proved only a false dawn. Yeats and Thomas are dead, the latter with the promise of his early work unfulfilled. Eliot turned playwright before his death. Pound has added to the *Cantos* without extending his range or influence. The poets of the 1930's are still honored, but their occasional thin volumes no longer generate excitement in either readers or critics. As for the young apprentice poets on the English scene, their muted voices can scarcely be heard among the strident echoes of our time.

But this situation has produced one good result. Criticism is now willing to take a second look at some poets previously taken for granted or disregarded—the otherworldly lyricism of Walter de la Mare, for example, and the ebullient, idiosyncratic, but always brilliant performance of Robert Graves. Certainly the latest edition of his *Collected Poems* reveals a poet who makes greater demands on our attention than do many contemporary writers of more gilded reputations.

Some poets outlast their periods, others their public. The fact that Robert Graves has done neither is easily explained. During his long career—his first book of verse appeared in 1916—he has never allied himself with any movement or group, never cultivated an eclectic or school style; consequently, he had nothing to lose when critical fashions changed. Also, he has never mistaken current popularity for lasting fame or courted the favor of his readers. A vet-

eran of many hard-fought literary skirmishes, he has battled for only one cause, his own integrity as a poet.

The means by which he has maintained his hard-bitten, roughly achieved literary independence help us in understanding both the tart native flavor of his best verse and the defensive attitude he sometimes assumes toward his poorest.

Graves has often stressed the fact that he is not addicted to any poetic "school." One should not believe, then, that his interest in unusual items of medieval literature makes him automatically a writer of romantic temper. There is in Graves's poetry, and has been since World War I, a strong element of the satirical, evidence of dissatisfaction with many aspects of the world around him—the times, war, England, even himself. Perhaps even the years he resided outside England seem further evidence of such inner dissatisfaction, the kind that is evident in "To Lucia at Birth," a sonnet written relatively late in life.

The earnest thought, the hope that the individual can resist changes which will make him or her conform to the world, instead of resolutely maintaining individuality, recurs in the last stanza of "At the Savoy Chapel," a poem written on the occasion of his daughter's marriage in 1945. The advice is even more pointed because his daughter, Jennie Nicholson, was, according to a newspaper quotation in a headnote, at that time a flight officer.

Despite the ever-recurring satire in the poems directed against the world as it is, in poems as diverse as "Vain and Careless," "Angry Samson," "Sergeant-Major Money," "Down, Wanton, Down," and "The Fallen Tower of Siloam," there is also a touch of true sentiment in Graves's poems. It appears sometimes as if the façade of the poet were stripped away temporarily, so that one can see the man and note that the poet and the man, contrary to the traditions of poetry, are not one and the same. In "Coronation Ad-

dress," for example, Graves writes in the first person, describing the reactions of a family, particularly the husband's, to the death of Queen Victoria, an incident that may well have a historical basis in the poet's own life. A five-year-old boy brings in the edition of the *Times* telling of the monarch's death, news which sends tears rolling down the father's cheeks. In response to his wife's remark that the queen was, after all, only a woman, the husband retorts that to honor the king is honorable, but to have a queen to serve is lovely. He adds that he hopes his son, the five-year-old, may someday serve a queen. The poem closes with an admonition to Elizabeth II to think well of her great-great-grandmother, who so earned the love of her subjects.

Graves is really at his best when least abstruse. The simpler, explicit style, the homely yet well-chosen idiom of a poem like "Recalling War," which looks back to World War I from the distance of a score of years, is poetically indicative of the poet at his best. In this poem Graves captures with extraordinary brilliance the attitudes of young men toward war's activity and their attitudes in later years as they remember what happened.

Graves began as a young poet mingling country sentiment and personal war experiences, but over the years the war poems have almost completely disappeared from his collections and his country themes have been reshaped to show the symbolic particularities of things. Meanwhile he has been formulating his own theories on the origin and nature of poetry, as set forth in *The White Goddess*, a highly controversial examination into the sources of poetic being and truth in the buried anthropological past. At least a third of the poems now collected have their roots in his theory of poetic myth, either directly in the love poems or indirectly in his ballad themes and his adaptations from the ancient Gaelic.

One of his attempts to repossess the past, to substitute the White Goddess for

Apollo and Zeus as the source of poetic magic far back in the dim beginning of all things, is "To Juan at the Winter Solstice," surely one of the notable poems of the century. The poem contains an array of images and references which bring into relationship the mythology of the seasons, the ancient, doomed heroes of Aegean and Celtic legends, and the Goddess in her persons as mother, lover, and layer-out of the dead, all a part of old fertility myths of predestined death and miraculous rebirth. The same theme is presented in "The White Goddess."

Graves has had a great deal to say—and most of that destructive—about the work of other poets but surprisingly little about his own, for he believes that the poem should be allowed to speak for itself. Also, he has stated that his writing belongs to the Anglo-Irish tradition into which he was born. This comment explains the mixture of irony and passion that we find in so much of his verse. He stands in the great tradition of Swift and Shaw, but with strange Celtic overtones of his own, and like them he shows the working of a mind that is partly imaginative, partly critical, and wholly committed to some individual concept of truth.

In "Rocky Acres" the images of some secret country of the heart and mind match perfectly the spirit of Robert Graves's best poems. For the landscape of his imagination is no barren land; it shelters and nourishes the poet who shuns the crowd.

How he has made his solitary position a post of strategy and advantage is reflected in the various editions of his *Collected Poems*, especially in the consciousness of man's burdens that we find in "Children of Darkness" and "Trudge, Body," the acceptance of human mortality in "Surgical Ward: Men," the reaching back into the dark corners of racial memory in "To Juan of the Winter Solstice," the outrageous ribaldry of "Ogres and Pygmies" and "Down, Wanton, Down," the droll foolery of "Mid-Winter

Waking," and "Traveller's Curse After Misdirection," the self-mockery of "A Pinch of Salt," and the emotional depths of love revealed in "The Sharp Ridge" and "The Dangerous Gift."

Poems such as these present Graves as a writer of considerable pith and variety, of occasional excellence so beautifully

and precisely centered and controlled that his true quality deserves the recognition which criticism has so often withheld in the past. These poems, like all good poetry, offer first the shock of surprise and then take gradual possession of mind and mood. This is the true magic of poetry as Robert Graves conceives it.

THE POETRY OF HALL

Author: Donald Hall (1928-)

Principal published works: *Exiles and Marriages*, 1955; *The Dark Houses*, 1958; *A Roof of Tiger Lilies*, 1964

Donald Hall has edited a number of collections of contemporary poetry, has written a Recitatio on Robert Frost and, in 1961, an autobiographical reminiscence of his childhood in New England, *String Too Short To Be Saved*. It is as a poet, however, that he is best known. His first volume of poems, *Exiles and Marriages*, won the Lamont Poetry Prize for 1955. In 1958, *The Dark Houses* was published; *A Roof of Tiger Lilies* appeared in 1964.

These volumes comprise, generally speaking, a single chronicle of a man's increasing separation from persons and places, and a consequent search for personal identity. Increasingly cut off from the old New England that nurtured him, the poet struggles to live self-reliantly without, at the same time, isolating himself completely. Here the word *poet* means the speaker of most of the poems and not inevitably Mr. Hall personally. The main themes which run through the three volumes are nostalgia for the past, or a region, which the modern world has left in decay; some bitterness and scorn for the kind of life which has displaced rural New England; and, of most importance, the problem of individual freedom.

Technically, the volumes also show a progression. Beginning with a preponderance of closely rhymed, evenly metered stanzas, Hall's later work moves toward

greater freedom in style and structure. Less reliance on rhyme, more irregular lines which move less to a meter than to syntactic patterns, and a diction and syntax closer to spoken speech and prose come to characterize the later poems. Such a movement in style is not unusual in contemporary poetry. In "Apology," from *Exiles and Marriages*, for example, he uses rhyme, alliteration, caesurae, and meter to create a formal effect to which the poet himself objects. In contrast, in some of the poems in *The Dark Houses*, he allows the repetition of the syntactic unit to provide the prosodic form. The effect is at times deceptively prosaic.

In his later verse Hall made, along with a change from metrical to syntactic prosody, a movement toward a more direct utterance, with the poet speaking in a more nearly normal voice to the listener. From a quiet, conversational start in a poem, Hall will often attempt to build gradually toward emotional intensity and even shock. He is likely to move from whimsy or unadorned observation to fantasy or the surrealistic, and sometimes to violence. Perhaps the technique mirrors a theme: beneath the surface of the normal, even the humdrum, lurks the bizarre, the unsettling, even the terrifying. Poem after poem follows such a procedure, and treats such a theme. "A Child's Garden," from

Exiles and Marriages, is an example. The poet relates the tale of a boy whose revered grandfather has died and who cannot return to the garden where they once were so close. That the grandfather is, in many other poems, characterized as representing the old New England serves to relate the poem to the theme of loss. The effect on the boy is at first whimsical, then frightening. Childish innocence gives way to confusion, violence, and fear. Hall is often about the task of resurrecting that lost innocence nostalgically, or exploring the psychological results of having lost it. Coloring everything is a sense of dying. For all its whimsy, its boyish fantasy, and its slightly academic wit, Hall's verse is finally somber, sober, and perhaps a bit over-serious. The note of puritanism is strong: the love of a hard land; respect for those who work long for little; introspection and even moral righteousness. Such qualities are more evident when considering the whole bulk of the poetry than in any one poem, where they are likely to be rather concealed.

Often Hall appears to overwork the theme of a lost past. He is possibly most interesting when he explores the tensions of a man attempting to salvage and maintain a viable identity. The term *perversity* is important in a good many poems by Hall; and it will be examined further. The term leads to an understanding of the psychological conflicts underlying the verse.

Two poems especially in *Exiles and Marriages*, "Lycanthropy Revisited" and "Exile," work out in some detail the theme which is Hall's greatest concern: a love rooted in innocence must, by the nature of things, forsake the "woods" and become part of experience; its innocence is doomed, therefore, by exposure, sex, knowledge, and changing circumstance. "You always hurt the one you love," as the song goes. There is guilt, as well as ego, and in "Lycanthropy Revisited" the poet humorously converts them both into a burlesque parody of Satan and the

Wolf-man. Beneath the studied humor, however, there is an irony bitterly directed at the self. Even the guilt seems as silly as the attempt to match Satan in sin. The roles pile up until identity is lost and guilt is submerged in fantasy. In "Exile," Hall begins to pull the strands together and perversity becomes more and more difficult to explain. It leads on to betray the present for a past which it had ruined to begin with. In "A Relic of the Sea," the final poem in *Exiles and Marriages*, a young father climbs to the attic of his childhood home to visit the place where he was master. He climbs back down, vowing to say good-bye to his youth and the lie of being free and only to be concerned with Self. It becomes clear at last that perversity is finally to be equated with the falsehood of isolation—a false sense of the self and of freedom. The past is, really, peopleless; the state of innocence is really only one of self-escape through fantasy and self-gratification through cultivated loneliness. Love, then, must be murdered or come out of the attic; love must be to know your own self and her's; love, therefore, is painful, the devil in the flesh, the thorn in the rose of the self. To be perverse, then, is to be unable to accept either oneself or another; it is, at last, to deny life by indulging in fantasies of the past, of alter egos, or by entombing oneself in the "jail" of a secure, middle-class, development—the "dark houses."

Toward the end of *Exile and Marriages* comes a short, and well-known, poem titled "Epigenethlion: First Child," which momentarily submerges "perversity" beneath a fatalistic and austere vision of birth, death, and rebirth.

Since the beginning Hall has turned his attention more and more to overcoming perversity by attacking escapism and attempting to define a meaningful kind of relationship with others as in "Marriage: to K." The knowledge he gains is, at least, the human need for a touching of hands, even though all men are separate and free. Yet, the scene and tone of

this poem remains a bit furtive and fearful, and the reader senses that the conflicts are not wholly resolved.

The Dark Houses takes up the theme of freedom: isolation is opposed to the possibilities of communion with others, a communion based on self-knowledge free from the curse of egoism. "Christmas Eve in Whitneyville" takes the poet back to his childhood home. But New England has changed completely, and the poet notes almost scornfully how the present inhabitants make prisons of their houses and refuse the risks that freedom entails. This volume shows the poet moving always in opposition to seclusion, isolation, as a protection against suffering and doubt. "The Clock-Keeper," "The Foundations of American Industry," "Residential Streets," "The Adults," "The Umbrella," "Oysters and Hermits," and "The Hut of the Man Alone" are all poems which, in one way or another, speak out against the modern willingness to hide in a crowd, or to be hide-bound, to escape or insulate oneself from the raw edge of experience. Yet, there are notes of uncertainty, as if the poet yet sym-

pathizes with the impulse to hide. The nervous energy displayed is due to the poet's being both objective in his depiction of neurotic escape and subjective in his expression of defiant independence.

Many poems in this volume explore these themes in abstract, intellectualized meditations. Then the abstract is given, suddenly, a palpable body or quality. "Coldness" becomes a key word, both a sensation and an idea. An elemental, detached, very objective viewpoint is taken toward human experience. Past, present, future; love, hate, guilt; the muck and mire of human life is viewed with aesthetic austerity. And the austerity seems to have a quality of cleanliness, a cold, purifying, bedrock reality which in turn suggests an idea or a conception of freedom and renewal. The conclusion to "Cold Water," the final poem in *A Roof of Tiger Lilies*, shows an emphasis on pure sensation, coldness, ritual rebirth, contact with the primitive and elemental, suggesting that it is a beginning, a start to a new view of human relationships and self-awareness.

THE POETRY OF HARDY

Author: Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

First published: *Wessex Poems and Other Verses*, 1898; *Poems of the Past and the Present*, 1901; *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses*, 1909; *Satires of Circumstance*, 1914; *Moments of Vision*, 1917; *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, 1922; *Human Shows, Far Phantasies: Songs and Trifles*, 1925; *Winter Words*, 1928

It is frequently said of Thomas Hardy that he turned to the writing of poetry as a result of his anger and disappointment at the shortsighted and discouraging critical response to his last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, which appeared in 1895. The truth of the matter appears to be that he had always preferred writing poetry to writing novels, and that he had written poetry before he presented himself to the reading public as a novelist and short story writer. He returned to his first love and decided to publish his poems only

after he had established for himself a firm reputation as a novelist. Some of the verses which he included in his first volume of poems, *Wessex Poems*, had been composed more than thirty years before. He was then fifty-eight years old, and for the next thirty years he devoted himself exclusively to writing or rewriting his poems until his death in 1928.

His *Collected Poems* retains almost a thousand poems which had appeared in eight preceding volumes of verse. This number testifies to his affection for and

dedication to poetry, but it is too large an output to allow him to maintain consistent excellence. A few, relative to the large total, must be deemed outright failures, deficient either because of metrical inconsistency or inappropriateness, eccentric, excessive inversion, awkward diction, or an imagery and idea of embarrassing sentimentality. At the other end of the spectrum of his achievement, however, there are a few poems, again relatively speaking, which are extremely successful and claim the right to a permanent place in the ideal anthology of great and memorable poems in the English language. These poems, together with the large number which are at least interesting and competent, constitute a respectable body of work worthy of attention and high regard.

As might be expected, Hardy's poetry complements and intensifies the unhappy vision of life depicted in most of his novels. Hardy protested in an introductory note to his final volume of poems, *Winter Words*, that he had not attempted to present a "harmonious philosophy" in that book or in any of his earlier poetic work. Despite these protestations, however, there can be no question that an easily discernible, special "Hardyesque" vision of life emerges from his poetry as well as from his prose. Cast in the form of imaginative art, it may not have the rigidity or discipline of what we call philosophy, but it offers, nevertheless, a very consistent, even relentless view of life as a series of adventures in frustration and defeat. Man as an individual, man as a creature of society and the cosmos, is simply acting out the whims and dictates of an inexorable life force, a blind, indifferent, neutral Immanent Will. Though the Will (variously called Fate, Chance, Hap, Destiny, and Necessity) is ostensibly neutral about man's fate, the general reality is that man usually becomes "time's laughstock," his efforts to achieve love and dignity and significance simply create "satires of circumstance." These concepts emerge so clearly and tri-

umphantly from his novels and poems because, while they may be few and schematic, they were for him matters of fundamental, abiding concern, and he used them constantly as the basis and the framework of his vision.

The themes and the vision which emerge from the poetry is almost wholly clouded and pessimistic. This was the way Hardy himself summed up the consensus of many reviews of his poetical work ("Apology," *Late Lyrics and Earlier*) a judgment which he deemed "odd." But the real oddity is that he should think this judgment strange because there can be little question that the corpus of his work is in general and quite consistently dark and sad and pessimistic. Hardy contended that the alleged pessimism was in truth a way of questioning and exploring the nature of reality, a first step, as he called it, toward the betterment of man's soul and body.

To point a way to the Better may have been his intention, but the fact is that he succeeded all too well in giving us a full look at the Worst; in his poetry there is very little, indeed only the barest hint scattered here and there, about the way to the Better. What little there is stresses the conjectural "if" in his poetical statements and the many qualifications which abound in his prose clarification. In his poetry there is very little of loving-kindness operating through scientific or any other kind of knowledge, and what free will we can see apparently works to the detriment of all, victor and victim alike.

In form, the poetry is fairly conventional. Hardy frequently exploited the forms of folk tradition: popular ballads, hymns, country songs, but there are many sonnets, couplets, dramatic monologues, narratives, and conversational anecdotes. Most are poems with a plot; that is, Hardy develops his theme through a highly concentrated, epitomized dramatic situation. This method has the value of establishing a distance between Hardy

the man and Hardy the poet. The poem may actually be the outpouring of Hardy's secret heart, but the externalized narrative or dramatic situation presents the theme in a way that detaches it from Hardy himself. The poems which are narrative monologues or dialogues, and there are many, are not concerned with the creation of character. They are concerned with presenting a view of the world, Hardy's "dramatic truth" for which the speakers or their situation are more or less the actors. There are a few (relatively speaking again) "philosophical" poems which deal directly and explicitly with Hardy's thesis. They represent only a small proportion of the total poetic production but they have attracted a disproportionate amount of attention precisely because their didactic and abstract quality, stripped of character and situation, reveals Hardy's viewpoint so clearly and starkly. Actually, they are like footnotes that clarify a text; if we want a fair characterization of the bulk of Hardy's poems we must not take the footnotes for the text.

The meters in many of the poems are not skillfully handled, especially in some poems which we know were of early composition. To the modern ear, there is a vaguely anachronistic quality about some of these poems, much of it sounding "poetical" in an old-fashioned way. There is some use of dialect terms, some word-coinages, a few obsolete words. On occasion, Hardy attracted too much attention to these words—most of them making for clumsy, gnarled lines—by inverting normal syntax for the sake of the regularity of his meter or to meet the demands of a rhyme. These inversions contribute to the artificial and contrived quality of his unsuccessful poems.

The basic theme of these varied forms and meters is the cruel irony of a universe which does not, and apparently cannot, answer man's desire, indeed, his hunger, for order, justice, equity, or even a rationale for his suffering. The forces or phenomena which oppose and frustrate

man can be identified from the various forms—narratives, situations, characters, settings—through which this basic theme is illustrated and dramatized.

In Hardy's world time erodes and corrodes the promise of youth, talent, hope, beauty, freshness, enthusiasm, and vibrancy. Love, in time, wastes away simply by being. Dreams grow weak and vague in time and soon lose their ability to inspire. If they survive, it is only to stand in mocking contrast to the disappointing reality outside. The body weakens; eyes dim; beauty vanishes in time, and too soon: death.

Death always seems to come too early or too late to provide whatever relief it may have offered; or it takes away the wrong person, meaning the good, and spares the ne'er-do-well.

Sex is a powerful force which victimizes all; which betrays unmarried girls into bearing illegitimate children; which compels them to betray the men they love; which distracts young men from their rightful careers and rightful destinies; which breaks up families, defies the security of traditional mores, and frequently leads to crime.

Love is fleeting, short-lived, and vulnerable; easily swayed, tempted, diverted, betrayed or betraying. Love is best at a distance, whether of time or in space, best when unconsummated and only dreamed of. When realized, it withers. It is a trap for women who must marry the wrong man and yearn for another, and who must therefore live in spiritual infidelity.

Society is viewed either as a system of tradition or security that is rapidly disappearing, or as the embodiment of outmoded ideas which destroy true lovers whose natural passions have betrayed them into defying the code. The rich girl may love the poor boy who loves her, but they are doomed to part because of the class system of society.

War is senseless, vicious, and inhumane. Invariably it is fought bravely but in ignorance by its victims, leaving

wives, illegitimate children, and betrayal behind. The settings for these poems are Greek wars, Roman wars, colonial wars, Continental wars, world wars, culminating in the bitter "Christmas: 1924."

Nature is generally seen as a powerful, blind force, an unknowing, well-intentioned, but blundering Mother, herself helpless in the grip of the heedless, inexorable Immanent Will. In the sense of the physical world about us, it is most often described as barren and bleak, shivering in the cold rain or snow or sleet, an outer weather to reflect the inner weather of the broken, desolate heart. If the scene is the beauty of spring or summer it is only to provide a mocking background to grief or to warn of the winter or death which lurks in or just behind the innocent beauty of the scene.

The setting for these experiences in frustration is frequently a graveyard, a sad, haunted house, an empty, crumbling church, or a desolate moor. Occasionally, we confront the whirling rapids of a river, suitable for a suicide or a killing. Sometimes it is a tavern where riotous drinking and dancing are betraying a young girl into straying, or a young wife

into adultery.

Hardy's is a poetry of action and drama, rarely a poetry of mere description. It is not often a poetry of song, but a poetry which moves at the pace of thoughtful speech or spoken thought. If we follow a division of poetry which Hardy himself once made, we may say that his poetry falls roughly into four categories: (1) passionate poems—his ballads and narratives of ballad-like incident; (2) sentimental poems—his poems of recollection and nostalgia, poems about love and lovers. (3) meditative poems—his introspective, first-person monologues. (4) fanciful poems—his poems of philosophical dialogues with Nature and such Powers or his poems of conversations with ghosts. For the most part, in these poems, Nature complains, God argues, and Man questions. But these poems, like most of Hardy's poems, are designed to give dramatic identities and significances to the abstract idea that man, nature, and the universe are in the hands of the Immanent Will which operates powerfully but blindly, quite indifferent to the individual fate or destiny.

THE POETRY OF H. D.

Author: H(ilda) D(oolittle) (1886-1961)

Principal published works: *Sea Garden*, 1916; *Hymen*, 1921; *Heliodora and Other Poems*, 1924; *Collected Poems of H. D.*, 1925; *The Usual Star*, 1928; *Red Roses for Bronze*, 1931; *Collected Poems of H. D.*, 1940; *By Avon River*, 1942; *The Walls Do Not Fall*, 1944; *Tribute to the Angels*, 1945; *The Flowering of the Rod*, 1946; *Selected Poems*, 1957

The poetry of H.D., as Hilda Doolittle chose to call herself, represents the most imagistic poems of the school of Imagism. This school of "new" poetry, flourishing during the first two decades of the twentieth century, was finally triumphed over and controlled by Amy Lowell. The proponents had as their credo of poetry (1) the use of common speech; (2) the creation of new rhythms; (3) absolute

freedom in subject matter; (4) the use of image; (5) the writing of hard, definite, and clear verse; and (6) the concentration of poetry in its very essence. Although most poets associated with this group later wandered from its narrow statement of beliefs or accomplished little, Hilda Doolittle adhered faithfully to the tenets and produced poetry that is very effective.

The first poem in her first collection called *Sea Garden* reveals her art and accomplishment. In "Sea Rose" with unemotional words, sharp and hard in their clarity, she describes the desiccated sea rose, stunted and blown with the sand in the wind, and yet, despised and abandoned, it has more real fragrance than another flower, the conventional lovely rose, supposedly more fragrant. The poet's room for maneuver and accomplishment is narrow. She uses sixteen lines and only sixty-four words. But the poem is a fine and delicate cameo chiseled in marble.

Another such poem is "Sea Lily." In this work the poet addresses the reed that has been broken and torn by the wind. The myrtle is speckled from this reed, the scales are torn from its stem, and it is cut by sand that is sharp as flint, yet through it all the reed stands lifted up despite all the efforts of enemy elements to cover it.

Such poems are triumphant successes. Many, however, are poignant cries which, because of the author's technique, her assiduous use of the credo of the Imagists, somehow fail to come through to full development. They suggest and hint, but they are underdeveloped and therefore are generally unsuccessful.

A poem of this kind is "Mid-Day." The poet says that the light and heat are beating her down into nothingness. The wind rattles the seed-pods, and her thoughts are scattered like the seeds. But in the midst of this dryness she looks up and sees the deep-rooted poplar spreading among the other trees on the hill, and she addressed the poplar, pointing out how much more vital and alive it is on the hill than the writer is, perishing as she is on the rocks.

Another such work is "Pursuit." In it the speaker is following a man whose footsteps are half hidden, interrupted here and there, but distinct enough to be followed. She follows him past the wild hyacinth stalk that he has snapped in passing, through the grass he has

brushed, past the forest ledge slopes and the roots that his hand snapped with its weight, on up the hill, then down where he fell, bruising his thigh and thereafter limping. Then the trail is lost and the writer can no longer find any trace of him in the underbrush and the fallen larch cones.

H.D.'s knowledge of Greek was extensive. More than half her work consists of poems on classical subjects and, to a smaller extent, translations of such writers as Euripides. One poem based on a Greek theme is the poignant "Eurydice," which tells how Orpheus descended to Hades, charmed Pluto with his music, and was allowed to lead Eurydice back to earth on the condition that he would not look back until he reached the upper air. The age-old story is, however, told from a different point of view, by Eurydice after she has been condemned to go back to Hades. She blames her fate on the arrogance and ruthlessness of Orpheus. In Hades she had been forgotten by the world and might have remained in peace but he came and disturbed her. Time and again she pathetically asks Orpheus why he turned and looked at her just when their goal was at hand. Because of his actions she has lost the earth. But she consoles herself with the thought that her hell is no worse than his, though he lives on earth with the sun and flowers. In hell she has more light than he has on earth; she has herself for flowers and her own fervor and her own spirit for a light. She realizes that before she can be lost, hell must allow the passing of the dead.

In other poems she passes from Greek mythology to literature, to Homer. Her poem "Helen" paints a death's-head black-and-white portrait of the wife who by her behavior caused the war between the Greeks and the Trojans. One of the great sufferers of that conflict, Penelope, is the subject of a powerful poem of passion and pride in "At Ithaca." Penelope, Ulysses' wife, is at home hiding behind her ruse for not marrying any of the suitors who are eating her into poverty: weaving the

funeral pall for her father-in-law, Laertes, during the day and unraveling it at night. After years of work she thought her duty was done, and she longed passionately that one of the suitors would tear her weaving aside and conquer her with a kiss. But each time she saw her work in its entirety she was reminded of the greatness of her husband, and in contrast with him all the suitors around her faded into nothingness.

Sometimes, in a single simple sentence, H.D. pours feeling that rends the heart, for example, in "Circe." Circe is alone after Ulysses has thwarted her and gone away. She recalls how easily she bent the other men to her will, changing them into beasts as she chose. Man was easy to conquer because he prayed for a sight of her face or a touch of her hand. She could call men from the corners of the world—all except one, Ulysses. And she would give them all up for a glance from him.

The same poignancy enriches the poem "Leda," which concerns itself with the daughter of Thestius and wife of Tyndarus, King of Sparta, seen bathing nude in the river by Zeus, who took the form of a swan in order to love her. This poem is voiced by Leda. She remembers the wonder of love and sighs for the return of the red swan, the soft feathery flutter of his wings, the warmth of his breast.

The poet's same artistic motivations, control, and skill carry over into her translations. There are the same short lines, sometimes only a word, the identical hard, sharp, precise language and images, and the same quite fine artistic triumphs, as in the "Choruses from the *Iphigeneia in Aulis* and *The Hippolytus of Euripi-*

des." The women in the "Chorus of the Women of Chalkis" cross the hills of sand and the sea to see the battleline. To them, Menelaus is golden and Agamemnon is proud; both command the thousand ships of the Greek forces. They are determined to return Helen to Menelaus. The women see Achilles, with the wind strapped about his feet, flying to battle. The women are awed by the number and beauty of his ships. The number of Greek vessels is uncountable, and life will no longer be the same. The ships etch the mind.

Miss Doolittle published a considerable bulk of poetry after her *Collected Poems* of 1925. *Hippolytus Temporizes*, although probably a failure as true classical tragedy, is successful as a lyrical development of her thesis that beauty lies in the heart and is inviolable. Increasingly her poetry centered on the ancient world, as in *Red Roses for Bronze*. The escape to the Classical world, or perhaps more properly the use of it for present-day problems, is continued in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, which starts in London during the war years but immediately reaches back to an older world, in *Tribute to the Angels*, and in *The Flowering of the Rod*. A departure in subject matter and in style is *By Avon River*, praise in poetry and prose of Shakespeare and his numerous contemporaries. At her death H.D. was still writing and some of her work remained unpublished.

The power and thrust of her work was quickly recognized. She was one of the Imagists whose accomplishment was solid and whose influence was considerable though short-lived, for her later poems did little to broaden her subject matter or to create any momentous changes in style.

THE POETRY OF HENLEY

Author: William Ernest Henley (1849-1903)

Principal published works: *A Book of Verses*, including "In Hospital," 1888; *The Song of the Sword and Other Verses*, 1892; *London Voluntaries and Other Verses*, 1893; *Poems*, 1898; *For England's Sake*, 1900; *Hawthorn and Lavender*, 1901; *A Song of Speed*, 1903; *Collected Works*, 1908

The poetry of W. E. Henley reveals a man of various postures, of fundamentally slight mental accomplishments, but of great variety in subject matter and verse forms.

His poem sequence "In Hospital" sets the pattern for most of his subsequent work. Presenting a rather new idea for a series of poems, he attempts the unhackneyed in his treatment. The volume chronicles his hospital experience from his moment of entry to his exit, and he gives brief sketches of most of the other people in the hospital at that time. He begins with "Enter Patient," continues with "Waiting" for the operation, then the "Operation" itself, and with his other experiences until he is "Discharged." He also sketches the nurses, the surgeons, and various other people confined as patients. These poems are essentially topical, but in some instances his language is realistic and powerful enough to convey his themes with vividness. The probe used on him while he is waiting for the operation feels like a crowbar, and life he believes is a blunder. The nurses almost come alive, and "Kate the scrubber" is magnificently portrayed in her macabre ballet performance before the patients.

"The Song of the Sword," which was dedicated to and strongly influenced by Rudyard Kipling is a half-successful effort to imitate heroic poetry in having the author speak in the person of the sword. The sword is the long and righteous arm of England. Today this note of imperialism, powered by Kipling's philosophy, has an offensive ring.

"Arabian Nights' Entertainments" is an effort to re-create the wonder of childhood dreams in the make-believe world of Sindbad, Scheherazade, Pan, wizened leprechauns, and dozens of other such characters. Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" held an especial attraction to the author in his memories that were thirty-five years "deep." But the poem is not a success. It gushes and names, trying to recall a lost magic; it does not evoke and re-create in the real sense. The magical words are given but the spirits of the

words are not reawakened.

"Bric-A-Brac," written between 1877 and 1888, continues to a certain extent Henley's experimentation in form and subject matter. Most of the works are entitled the "Ballade" of one thing or another, as "Ballade of Youth and Age," and end with an "Envoy," but these efforts at archaism are generally unsuccessful. Far more noteworthy are such efforts at realism as "In Fisherrow." The sentiment in the poem is embarrassing rather than poignant, but the realistic picture of the ugly old woman selling fish is vividly presented. Fifty years old, she has a bronzed and shriveled face and neck; her feet are large, her legs bowed and spare and strong; and as she walks along imploring would-be purchasers to buy her fish she has the "spirit of traffic" ever in her eye.

Another poem in the volume that reveals one unfortunate aspect of Henley is "We shall surely die." Crippled as he was, Henley often postured a bravado that attempted to outstare age and debility but generally failed. Here, recognizing that man must die, he affirms that he and his love will accept their fate and not resent and scold it.

The poems he called "Echoes," (written between 1872 and 1889) contain some of his best and his most widely known works. The smooth and even "O, gather me the rose, the rose" hauntingly affirms the value of love as an antidote to fate. Another of the same kind, "Praise the generous gods for giving," is less successful, too easy an acceptance and affirmation of living. Quite successful is the Byronic "We'll go no more a-roving by the light of the moon." In it he consciously twits the Byronic pose yet reveals in light parody the fun of the active life, though the poem concludes that the poet will not go roving anymore but will weep at home instead.

Another accomplished poem in "Echoes" is the ballad-like "O, Falmouth is a fine town with ships in the bay." The burthen and third stanza are derived from an old song; the remainder is a lively, muscular rendition of seventeenth

and eighteenth century sentiment in sea songs. The most popular of the "Echoes" is "Invictus," with its first line, "Out of the night that covers me," and its concluding declaration that the author is the captain of his own soul.

"Rhymes and Rhythms" reveals little progress in technique, though more in experimentation. In the prologue the author asserts that since something about life is dead it is time to pull back to the fire of meditation and retrospection. These poems are more brooding about matters that can loosely be called philosophical. He experiments with new verse forms, and occasionally he strikes new depths in language.

Hawthorne and Lavender does not differ significantly from the earlier volumes. In the "Envoy" Henley says that his songs which were formerly of the sunrise are now of the sunset; yet they were joyfully written. They are still songs of joy that show little diminution from his earlier works. Occasionally the simple statement of affirmation is marred by the posing that was never far from Henley's nature. For example, in "Will I die of drink?" he feigns a cocksureness that he does not feel. Will he die of drink? Why not? Will he rest and think? Why? Why brood on mortality? Everybody must die, so why not the sooner the better?

For England's Sake: Verses and Songs in Time of War sounds most of Henley's worst faults. The poems are bellicose and chauvinistic. Two, for example, "The Man in the Street" and "'Our Chief of Men,'" rattle the sword in the manner of Henley's friend Kipling. Another, "Pro Roge Nostro," asks what the author has done for England and asserts that there is

nothing he would not do for the race of mighty men raised on that island.

Henley's best poems are those contained in "London Types." In approach they go back to his first poems, "In Hospital." In execution they approach a Dickensian orchestration of the seamy side of London life. Almost exclusively the characters described are lowly and Henley treats them with an unusual honesty, in a language which he had not otherwise indulged in, slangy, earthy, and realistic. "The 'Bus-Driver'" is a lively and truly etched portrait. The driver hogs the road, shouts from his vehicle, curses those who cross him, "meets / His losses with both lip and £ s. d." and has no gods "but Fake."

"'Liza'" bristles with slang, and realism. Her *old man's* not always on the up-and-up, her *old woman's* a boozier, but Liza herself is a perfect lady, with feathers and fringes to prove it. She uses her *pearlies*, her *barrer* and *jack* to impress her *bloke*. But other than her "gay and giddy whirl," Liza is only a stupid girl who works hard.

The "Barmaid" reveals a girl named Elizabeth who tries to butter her image by calling herself Elise. She apes the fashion in her cheap clothes and reads penny novels to improve her taste. But she is a mere shadow, not a person at all, and after she has served her time at the bar she simply disappears.

Henley's poetry in total has little weight in the history of literature. A few items are interesting as period pieces, influenced by the spirit of naturalism that influenced English literature at the end of the century; others survive because they reveal the personality of their writer.

THE POETRY OF HEREDIA

Author: José María de Heredia (1803-1839)

Principal published work: *Poems*, 1825

José María de Heredia y Campuzano, born in Cuba at a time when the island was beginning to resent its position as a

territorial possession of Spain, was regarded by Spaniards as "the compendium and epitome of all enmity toward Spain."

Yet, at least in his early period, he considered himself a Spaniard and referred in his poetry to "tender Mother Spain." During his youth, his father was chief judge in a court in Caracas that had to try rebels against the tyranny of Monteverde. Because of leniency, the judge was demoted to a position in Mexico where José María lived until his father's death. Then he went to Havana to complete his law studies.

There he became a member of a club of revolutionists called Soles de Bolívar (Suns of Bolívar), who were plotting for Cuban independence. Heredia supported the 1820 revolution in Spain of Rafael del Riego and wrote angry poems against a "stupid Spain" for executing him. It is no wonder that after he had been admitted to the bar in 1823 and had begun to practice law in Matanzas, he was picked up at the outbreak of a revolution that same year and sentenced to perpetual banishment. With all the poetry he had written in Mexico and Cuba, he went to New York. There he spent two years as a journalist, writing literary and theatrical criticism, and in 1825 publishing his first volume of poems, which contains practically all that are best known. A later supposedly "augmented edition" from Toluca in 1832 contained only a few unimportant new original poems, some translations, and a philosophical dissertation in verse on immortality that added little to his reputation. The New York printing contained a preface in English extolling the virtues of the volume as an aid for North Americans wanting to learn Spanish. Heredia added: "May the readers accept this small service from an exiled young man as an expression of gratitude for the asylum he has found in this happy country."

Among the long poems in this volume were "En el teocalli de Cholula" ("On the Temple Pyramid of Cholula"), "En una tempestad" ("In a Hurricane"), "A Niágara" ("Ode to Niagara Falls"), and "Al sol" ("To the Sun"). They were well received. Possibly their tinge of melan-

choly, so like his own poetry, made William Cullen Bryant decide to translate two of them, "In a Hurricane" and "Ode to Niagara Falls," that were published in the *United States Review and Literary Gazette*, in 1827, the first Latin American poetry to appear in English.

In 1830 the youthful Argentine poet Esteban Echeverría returned to his native Buenos Aires after spending five years among the Romantic poets of France; his advice to his fellow writers was to break away from literary dependence on Spain and to hymn the natural beauties of the New World. Heredia was already painting in poetry the American scene and expressing romantic ideas in classic verse forms. In "On the Temple Pyramid of Cholula" he used ten-syllable unrhymed lines resembling English blank verse.

Seated in the ancient Aztec temple, the youthful poet watched the sun setting behind the volcano Iztaccihual, whose snowcap was tinged with gold. The stars came out, and as the moon descended, the shadow of Popocatepec, like a colossal ghost, extended till it covered the earth. This eclipse of nature caused the poet to ponder on the passing of the cruel Aztec rulers and all their glory. In this passing he saw how temporary is human fury and madness.

In the poem, the reader finds such classical touches as a mention in the American landscape of the olive tree "sacred to Minerva," and of Titan and his struggle against the gods of Olympus. With the subjectivity of later romantic poets, Heredia, though describing a scene in Mexico through the eyes of a seventeen-year-old, was actually poetizing his soul and its agony at what it sees.

In his "Ode to Niagara Falls," Nature stirred his emotions to take lyrical form. Confronting this marvel, he thought of the still greater marvels of God and Time. In the awesomeness of the scene, he was filled with nostalgia for his native Cuba. Cynics may remark that the sense of absence is a common theme of literature, and Heredia had scarcely

spent enough years of his life in Cuba to become very closely attached to it. He had never been happy or felt at home there, any more than he had in Mexico or in the United States. In reality he had no roots. But melancholy is an emotion common to much poetry, and Heredia was a poet. The sight of the rushing water set his poet's heart pounding. As Bryant translated the opening lines:

My lyre! Give me my lyre! My bosom
feels
The glow of inspiration. Oh, how long
Have I been left in darkness, since this
light
Last visited my brow! Niagara!
Thou with thy rushing waters doth
restore
The heavenly gift that sorrow took
away.

Though the poet had never been so moved before, he felt that something was missing from this scene:

The delicious palms that on the plains
Of my own native Cuba spring and
spread
Their thickly foliated summits to the
sun.

But a few moments of contemplation changed his mind.

But no, Niagara,—thy forest pines
Are fitter coronal for thee.

A few lines later, bemoaning his hopeless situation and wondering how an unfrozen heart can be happy without love, he expressed a wish that some one worthy of being loved could share his walk. At

the end, however, the longing for glory swept over him, and while he knew he would be dead within a few years, he expressed the hope that his verse, like Niagara, might be immortal and that in heaven he could "Listen to the echoes of my fame." At one point in the poem Heredia declared:

From my very boyhood have I
loved . . .
To look on Nature in her loftier
moods,
At the fierce rushing of the hurricane.

The full intensity of his temperament is revealed in his "Ode to the Hurricane." "Hurricane, hurricane, I feel thee coming," he begins. Then he ascends to poetic heights in a description of the color, the fury, the roar, and the horror of the storm. The poet's personal reaction concludes the poem. The sublimity of the storm makes him forget the vileness of the world. He raises his head in delight. Amid the roar, he rises to the throne of God and with hot tears streaming down his cheeks he adores God's lofty majesty.

Ardor and passion also fill a number of Heredia's political poems that voice love of liberty and hatred of oppression. Cato, Riego, and Napoleon are admired as champions of liberty in excellent sonnets. His "Himno del desterrado" ("Hymn of the Exile"), written in 1825 and prophesying Cuba's freedom from Spain, served as a rallying cry for three quarters of a century until independence was finally won.

THE POETRY OF HODGSON

Author: Ralph Hodgson (1871-1962)

Principal published works: *The Last Blackbird and Other Lines*, 1907; *The Bull*, 1913; *Eve and Other Poems*, 1913; *The Mystery and Other Poems*, 1913; *The Song of Honour*, 1913; *Poems*, 1917; *Hymn to Moloch*, 1921; *The Silver Wedding and Other Poems*, 1941; *The Skylark*, 1958; *Collected Poems*, 1961

Ralph Hodgson wrote very little but remarkably fine poetry through a long life that was mostly removed, through

conscious choice, from the bustle of the busy world. A self-educated pressman and draftsman from Yorkshire, he did not

publish any collection of verse until he was thirty-six, when *The Last Blackbird* appeared in 1907. The volume included such polished lyrics as "The Linnet" and the title poem, and Hodgson was immediately granted a place of prominence among lyricists of his generation. With his appearance in the second Georgian anthology in 1915, he was indelibly linked, for better or worse, with that group of pre-World War I British poets who have been termed "Georgian" because of King George V and because Edward Marsh, editor of the anthology prophesied another Georgian Age as a result of their talent.

The group with which Hodgson was thus associated consisted of poets as varied as Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Rupert Brooke, W. H. Davies, Walter de la Mare, W. W. Gibson, John Drinkwater, John Masefield, James Stephens, Siegfried Sassoon, and the early D. H. Lawrence and Robert Graves. They had no formal aesthetic—few British poetry groups have ever had—but they did have a number of poetic aims and attributes that linked them, although they themselves were not too much aware of this connection at the time. Though not as resolutely formal in technique as Ezra Pound, or as ready to plum the emotional limits of despair as T. S. Eliot, all the Georgians were like that more famous pair in moving away from late Victorian rhetoric and moralizing towards a more realistic depiction in poetry of the world in which they lived. Reacting against scenes of romantic and patriotic glamor in the poetry of Tennyson and against his obtrusive moralizing, they also avoided the hypnotic rhythms and eccentric themes of Swinburne. They deliberately endeavored to return to the roots of Romanticism associated by them, in scenes of rural simplicity, with the woods, birds, and animals of Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley.

This was not merely an attempt to imitate long-dead poets or to retreat from the complex disappointments of the indus-

trial world, but also a genuine effort to re-create the original elements of the Romantic Movement. *Poems*, Hodgson's second book, contains several lyrics which succeed in achieving these effects admirably. His short poem, "Stupidity Street," reprinted countless times since its appearance in this volume, is Hodgson at his quiet but succinct best in his vision of singing birds offered for sale as food in Stupidity Street shops. Following the destruction of the world of nature, he warns, the shops will be empty, with nothing left to sell.

This simple but profound depiction of man's brutalization of the world is constructed with the compactness of William Blake. In this same volume appeared the longer lyric, "The Bull", for which Hodgson was awarded the William Polignac Prize in 1914. The poem is also characteristic of the transitional movement that carried forward the foremost themes of English Romanticism into an age of aircraft and computers. The old bull is not sentimentalized or made to stand for nature outraged by the ravages of man (as is so often the case in minor Romantic verse). The poem, of thirty sextets in length, dramatizes raw life itself, with the deposed pride of the herd now a gaunt shape of skin and bones standing alone by the edges of the lake waiting for death. Dreams of his younger days, his prowess, his potency, his battles and victories are swiftly recorded, finally returning to the moment of decay when he will become food for the vultures.

Toughness and precision were Hodgson's constant hallmark when his lyric gift was at its best. "Eve," his frequently reprinted poem about the fall of man (or woman) in the garden of Eden is also familiar to many who do not know of Hodgson's career or even his name. There is in the poem a sensuality unusual for Hodgson's time, which was often characterized by prudery, and a lyrical tautness equal to that of Thomas Hardy. The actual seduction of Eve by the serpent—here a cobra—is watched from

afar by a chattering titmouse and a wren, and Eve's fall is made ominous by this distancing. Even more than the triumph of lewd evil is sensual joy itself—Eve with the berry part way to her mouth—that the reader remembers. A similar effect is created in Hodgson's brief song about a vagrant girl degrading herself to sell ring tosses at a carnival booth, ancient wildness in her dark eyes like beasts in a den. Such springtime paganism is rare in English poetry at any time, but is perfectly depicted by Hodgson in joyous lyricism set to a musical refrain in "Time, You Old Gypsy Man."

Though Hodgson's verse was not escapist, it was not of the 1920's either. All his work was in adaptation of the ballad meter, and his best efforts were in a dozen lines or so; the few long poems tend to dissipate intensity through repetitious meter and failure to sustain drama

from inherently static situations. When Hodgson is at his best, we still think of Hardy. Perhaps this unwillingness or inability to develop led Hodgson to abandon poetry with the 1917 volume. He left England in 1924 for Japan, where he taught English literature at Sendai University until 1938, when he moved to the United States with the Ohio missionary and school teacher he married in the Orient. This most authentic of the British Georgians spent the last twenty-four years of his life, until his death at ninety-one in 1962, residing on a small farm in Minerva, Ohio, a figure almost unknown to the outside world. A small volume, *The Skylark*, was published in 1958, but this group of resolutely archaic lyrics merely confirmed the indications that his modest but firm talent had had its real fulfillment in pre-World War I London, forty years before.

THE POETRY OF HOFMANNSTHAL

Author: Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929)

Principal published works: *Ausgewählte Gedichte* (Selected Poems), 1903; *Die gesammelten Gedichte* (Collected Poems), 1907

All efforts to classify Hugo von Hofmannsthal as a member of a period or a literary school have failed. Terms such as romantic symbolist, neoclassicist, neo-romanticist, expressionist, aesthete, mystic, or naturalist may all be partially true, but they are still insufficient to encompass his work. His success as a librettist for Richard Strauss operas has obscured his even greater contributions as a poet. Followers of literary fashions tended to ignore Hofmannsthal, who refused to be typified. The turn of the century "melting pot" atmosphere of Vienna—German, Italian, Slavic, Jewish—and Hofmannsthal's own Jewish, German, and Italian parentage had considerable influence on his development. He was open to all manifestations of his surroundings, including all new literary trends. Needless to say, the psychological findings by his famous fellow Viennese

citizens, most notably Freud, Jung, and Adler, were among those influences.

Hofmannsthal was born in 1874. During his last three years in high school he published his first poems under a pen name. As a student at the University of Vienna he had already gained fame as a poetical "Wunderkind." Under his pen name, Loris, he became a member of the habitués in Vienna's literary coffee-houses.

His early age was also his major period of poetic writings. The poems express some of the anguish of Goethe's well known lament: "... If pain forbids a man to talk, God gave me the gift to speak."

Many truly down below must perish
Where the heavy oars of ships are
passing;
Others by the helm up there have
dwelling,

Know the flight of birds and starry
countries.

In the same poem the young Hofmannsthal also indicates his recognition of the interdependence of all things.

I can never cast off from my eyelids
Lassitudes of long-forgotten peoples,
Nor from my astounded soul can banish
Soundless fall of stars through outer
distance.

Many destinies with mine are woven;
Living plays them all through one another,

And my part is larger than this slender
Life's ascending flame or narrow lyre.

In a Vienna coffeehouse he met Stefan George; a friendship developed, which led to his contribution in a literary magazine ("Blaetter fuer die Kunst") published by George. George was greatly impressed by Hofmannsthal and wrote him: "You and I could have exercised a most beneficial dictatorship in literature for many years," yet Hofmannsthal refused to become a follower of George's strict concept of art for art's sake, and he did not share the loyalty of George's disciples known as the "George Circle." The second meeting with George ended in an argument and a request for a duel by George. Later he was again invited by George to make contributions to his magazine, but in 1906 the correspondence came to an end. Hofmannsthal was too eager to study new developments to be concerned by only one literary point of view. Like Goethe before him, he tried to interpret his environment in terms of all available knowledge; however, the pace of expanding knowledge in Hofmannsthal's time had accelerated to such a degree that any effort to obtain a true universal knowledge was bound to fail. His intensive readings of contemporary authors were not used to fortify a personal point of view, but rather to absorb more manifestations of the complexity of life. He did not build an ivory tower, as George did, with a priestly concept of poetry. His poetic effort always centered

around the importance of life as a whole, and not as a selective process. Speaking about his poetry he stated: "How from any abyss of the world could it bring back anything more than human feelings, when poetry itself is nothing more than the language of men." He admitted, that he experienced unusual states of exaltation which he termed the "lyrical state," but even under these conditions he remained on firm ground. His language is musical and graceful in style. Hofmannsthal is more easily accessible than George. Comparisons with Rilke and Verlaine are justified. Water and water-related terms, such as *river, well, fountain, and bridge*, are his most favored symbols. His poem "Reiselied" is frequently compared to Goethe's in style:

To engulf us waters eddy,
Down the boulders roll, to crush,
And to bear us off already
Birds on powerful pinions rush.

Poetry is not an easy task for a man who is subject to many influences. In his epigram, "The Art of Poetry," he states:

Perilous, terrible art! This thread I
spin out of my body
And at the same time the thread serves
as my path through the air.

By describing a landscape he expresses the reward he receives from his perilous and terrible efforts:

The breath of flowers spoke to him,
but only
Of alien beauty—and in silence he
Breathed in the pristine air, but without
longing:
Only the need of serving made him
glad.

His desire to understand his contemporaries gave many liberal critics an opportunity to attack him as an imitator and to accuse him of trying to maintain the status quo of Austria. Conservatives were equally ready to reject him. Hofmannsthal considered himself as a patriotic Austrian, but he was thinking about Austria as a state with a cultural mission. Al-

though the old Austrian universality was still in existence, it showed signs of disintegration. That Hofmannsthal retained his sanity during his efforts to diagnose all symptoms of the era, without being himself defeated by the virus of disintegration, is attributed mainly to his unwavering Catholic faith. In the field of religion he was inquisitive, and he read with particular interest William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and Kierkegaard's works; but the universality of the Roman Catholic Church and belief in the mystical body of Christ, which encompasses all that was and all that will be, made it possible for him to subordinate all other influences. The major crisis in his life became public knowledge when he permitted publication of the Chandos letter in a Berlin newspaper in 1901. This letter, addressed to Sir Francis Bacon and signed by Lord Chandos, was immediately identified as autobiographical. Hofmannsthal originally intended to address the letter to George, but he mailed him a copy instead. This letter speaks about his increasing skepticism and the fear that his analytical mind might paralyze his creative powers. He claimed, that he was not able anymore to speak coherently and that he had a physical aversion to words like *spirit*, *soul*, *body*. Under minute analysis, all assumptions seemed to him to be without foundation and therefore kept him from expressing an opinion on anything. Here he also gives evidence of his empathic power: "A pitcher, a harrow abandoned in a field, a dog in the sun, a neglected cemetery, a cripple, a peasant's hut—all these can become the vessel of my revelation." Word skepticism and work mysticism (his terms) were subjects close to him even before the Chandos letter. In 1895 he wrote that "people are tired of talking, they feel a deep disgust with words. For words have pushed themselves in front of things. This has awakened a deep love for all the arts that are executed in silence."

Fortunately the Chandos crisis did not

lessen his creativity. It may have had influence in leading Hofmannsthal from lyric poetry to the dramatic poetry which ultimately led to his work as a librettist. Yet many passages of his dramatic verse plays and playlets could fill volumes of lyrical poetry. The first play, *Little Theater of the World* opens with the lines:

I bathed, till by the open window's
glare
Glancing between my fingers I could
tell
That slantwise now the low sun's rays
were falling
On golden trees, long shadows gloomed
the fields.
Now up and down I pace the narrow
path;
Bird-catcher you would think me from
a distance.

Hofmannsthal's poems have also been compared to those of William Butler Yeats ("Crossway," "The Rose," "The Shadowy Water"). If it is true that lyrical drama survives as poetry but not as drama, the statement applies to Hofmannsthal as well as to Yeats. However, the case of *Everyman* seems to represent an exception to this rule. The poetic and dramatic qualities of this play make it a perennial favorite at the Salzburg Festival and on many other famous stages. His earlier play *Death and the Fool*, first presented in 1893, gives evidence of his ever-present lyricism:

Now the last mountains lie in gleaming
shrouds,
Clothed in the moistened glow of sun-
steeped air.
There hangs a wreath of alabaster
clouds
Above, here rimmed with gold, grey
shadows there:
So once did Masters of past centuries
Paint clouds which bear Our Lady
through the skies.

Opera lovers will be richly rewarded if they explore the poetic values of the librettos in the Strauss operas. It is not surprising that Strauss, who was describing a transitional period in musical terms,

should be attracted by a poet who had inherited Romanticism and was trying to express feelings meaningful to the twentieth century. In 1929, while he was preparing for the funeral of his eldest son, who had committed suicide, a brain hemorrhage ended Hofmannsthal's life at the age of fifty-five.

It is too early for a verdict on Hofmannsthal by literary history. At present it seems that the names of his contemporaries, Rilke and George, are more frequently mentioned in German literature. But it is inconceivable that a poet who

encompassed the diversities of two centuries should not gain a greater significance when the perspective from another century permits a more objective judgment. Hofmannsthal was always conscious of the transitoriness of all striving and of the indestructible relationship of all things created:

Then: that in lives a century old I
share
And kinsmen laid in coffins long ago
Are yet as close to me as my own hair,
Are no less one with me than my own
hair.

THE POETRY OF HÖLDERLIN

Author: Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843)
First published: *Gedichte* (Poems), 1826

Hölderlin is classified as a German Romanticist, but in most of his poems he praises the ideals of Greek mythology. Born in 1770, he was educated in a secularized Protestant monastery school. His father died two years after his birth, and his mother, who had a very strict conception of Protestantism, became the major influence in his life. Neither the study of theology nor his mother's efforts to transfer her religious ideas to her son made him a theologian. Hölderlin was not able to find in his mother's strict disciplinarian idea of Christianity the vehicle for his soaring idealism. However, reflections about God are woven into most of his poems ("Man is God when he dreams, a beggar when he reflects"), but for most of his life the personalized gods of Greece were to him a welcome contrast to his imagined remoteness of Christianity. At the age of fifteen he began to write poetry. His only other interest was music, and he displayed great skill with the flute, the violin, and the piano. This musicality, combined with his extreme lyrical sensitivity, gives Hölderlin's poetry an almost musical flow, which in the opinion of some admirers surpasses the poetry of Goethe. His idealistic dreams about

Greece separated him from his great contemporaries (Schiller, who tried to help in his early years; Goethe, who rejected most of his efforts; Hegel, who was his schoolfriend). The preoccupation with Greece made him also a strong critic of Germany.

He was always conscious of his eccentricity, and he broke an engagement to his first love, Luise Nast because he considered himself temperamentally too unstable for marriage. At the end his extreme isolation drove him into an imaginary world; he suffered a complete mental breakdown and was insane during the last forty years of his life.

The writing of poetry was a sacred task for him. In one of his youthful poems, which he classified as "eccentric enthusiasm," he stated:

Holy vessels are the poets,
In which the wine of life,
The spirit of heroes is preserved. . . .

His poems are usually constructed on the "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" basis, and never are witty. He objects to novelty: "On no account do I wish that it were original. For originality is novelty to us; and nothing is dearer to me than the

things which are as old as the world itself." His strength lies in the power to evoke visions without striving for originality. One of his most widely used symbols is the flower representing birth and death.

In 1795 he found a position as tutor in a banker's house in Frankfort, a post which permitted him to devote most of his time to writing. Here he also had the most important encounter of his life, when he met Susette Gontard, the wife of his employer. She fulfilled his dream of Greek perfection, and he renamed her Diotima. In the same year he wrote his first poem about Diotima. Many more were to follow:

. . . When Time's burden lay upon
me,
And my life was cold and pale,
And already, bowing downwards,
Yearned for the still shadows'
realm . . .
You appeared in all your radiance,
Godly image, in my night . . .

Most romanticists deal with the subject of love in the light of rebellion against the age of reason. Hölderlin uses love as the great unifying factor of material and spiritual forces. In Frankfort he also wrote his only major prose work, *Hyperion*. Subtitled "The Hermit in Greece," the work reflects his love for Diotima and his struggle for a renaissance of the golden age of Greece. In "Hyperion's Song of Fate" his fatalistic attitude finds expression:

But it is our fate
To find no resting-place,
And suffering men
Dwindle and fall
Blindly from one
Hour to the next,
Hurled like water
From rock to rock,
Downwards for years to uncertainty.

Susette Gontard responded to his youthful adoration. It is probable that the love affair was discovered, for two years later Hölderlin left Frankfort and Dio-

tima. It is doubtful that he was ever able to overcome the tremendous grief of separation. The period of eccentric enthusiasm came to an end, but the lyric power of Hölderlin increased. Shortly after his Frankfort experience he finished his major work in dramatic verse, *The Death of Empedocles*. Empedocles sacrifices himself to return to eternity, because a man of purity must disintegrate among men who have lost their connection with nature and the universe.

O flowers of heaven! beauteous stars,
Will you now also fade, and will the
night
Descend upon your soul, O Father
Aether!
If your youths, the splendid ones, are
grown dim
Before you? Now I know: what is
divine
Must perish. By his fall I'm made a
seer. . . .

Hölderlin had many forebodings of his doomed fate:

High my spirit aspired, skywards, but
down to earth
Love soon drew it; still more suffer-
ing humbled it.
So I follow the curve of
Life and return to my jour-
ney's start.

Between 1800 and 1803, Hölderlin re-examined his position toward Christianity and Greece. The "Archipelago" gives some indication of his findings:

. . . And if impetuous Time too force-
fully seizes
My head, and want and wandering
among mortals shatter
My mortal life, on stillness, in your
depths, let me ponder. . . .

The transition from Greece to Christianity is also apparent in "Bread and Wine":

For when some time ago now—to us it
seems distant—
They all ascended by whom life had
been favoured with joy,
When from human kind the Father
averted His visage

And all over the earth sorrowing,
 rightly, began,
 When at last had appeared a quiet
 Genius, consoling
 Sacredly—He that proclaimed day-
 time's conclusion and went—
 Then as a sign that they had once been
 here and again would
 Come, the heavenly choir left a few
 presents behind . . .

About 1802 he also departed from the hexameters of his style and began to use rhythms in his poems, which later became influential among many modern German poets. His preoccupation with Christianity had not the characteristics of a conversion, though the domineering influence of his mother, combined with his strong sense of obedience may have been of some importance. However, the conflict between his ideas and his mother's desire to transform him into a God-fearing man was never resolved. In 1802, after many failures to obtain employment, he found a position as a tutor in France. But in the summer of the same year he returned home. Reports of his mental breakdowns became more frequent. He also received the news that Diotima had died. At this period Hölderlin's poetic capabilities were still high, and he wrote some of his most important poems. Among these is his powerful "Patmos":

Near is
 The God, and hard to grasp.
 But where there is danger,
 The Saving powers grow too.

In darkness dwell
 The eagles, and fearless across
 The abyss go the sons of the Alps
 On lightly built bridges. . . .

In "Germania" he entered a new phase of naturalistic poetry, but without forgetting his spiritual home Greece:

Not them, the blessed, who once ap-
 peared,
 The images of Gods in the ancient
 land,

These, it is true, I may call no more,
 but if,
 You waters of home, now with you
 The love of my heart laments, what
 else does it desire,
 The sacredly sorrowing? For full of
 expectation
 Lies the land while, as if lowered
 In sultry days, you yearning ones, to-
 day a heaven,
 Foreboding, casts its shadow about you.

Again his premonitions of years to come is apparent:

Alas, where shall I find when
 Winter, comes, flowers, and where
 Sunshine,
 And the shadows of earth?
 The walls stand speechless and cold, in
 the wind
 Weathercocks clatter.

In 1805 his illness became serious. A doctor reported that his speech was no longer understandable, composed as it was of German, Greek, and Latin sounds.

Tragically, it was only at this time that many influential Germans became conscious of Hölderlin's genius. But now he had to live in obscurity because his behavior did not permit social contacts except for occasional short visits by understanding friends. He spent the last thirty-six years of his life in the house of a friendly carpenter. But in spite of his frequent attacks he continued to write poetry. Unfortunately, most of those writings were destroyed. The poems which were saved indicate that Hölderlin's art was never completely exhausted, as these lines found penciled on a wooden board indicate:

The lines of life are various; they
 diverge and cease
 Like footpaths and the mountains' ut-
 most ends;
 What here we are, elsewhere a god
 amends
 With harmonies, eternal recompense
 and peace.

Many of the letters written to his mother during this period show that until the very end she tried to influence her son to

return to her way of Protestantism. Hölderlin, however, expressed more and more interest in Roman Catholicism. He died, apparently without pain and in prayer, at the age of seventy-three in 1843.

Many early German editions ignored the poems written during his illness. It was not until 1923 that the first complete edition of his works was published. His illness became the subject of many studies. One of these states that Hölderlin was not destroyed by weakness or his inability to cope with his environment, but precisely by his firm purity incapable of any compromise. Among the twentieth century German poets Stefan George and

Rainer Maria Rilke, especially, acknowledged their debts to Hölderlin and caused a revival of appreciation of his work.

The loneliness of his vision in a depersonalized society makes Hölderlin a favorite among many devoted friends of poetry who give preference to the lone idealist over his more famous Romantic contemporaries. The insurmountable difficulty in translating Hölderlin's sensitive lyricism adequately makes it improbable that his work will ever be appreciated by a world-wide audience. But if there is a borderline between music and poetry, Hölderlin came closest in crossing from one to the other.

THE POETRY OF HUGO

Author: Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

First published: *Odes et poésies diverses*, 1822; *Odes et ballades*, 1826; *Les Orientales*, 1829, (*Poems of the Orient*); *Les Feuilles d'automne*, 1831, (*The Leaves of Autumn*); *Les Chants du crépuscule*, 1835, (*Twilight Songs*); *Les Voix intérieures*, 1837, (*Interior Voices*); *Les Rayons et les ombres*, 1840, (*Rays and Shadows*); *Les Châtiments*, 1853, (*Punishments*); *Les Contemplations*, 1856-1857, (*Contemplations*); *La Légende des siècles*, 1859, 1877, 1883 (*The Legend of the Centuries*); *Les Chansons des rues et des bois*, 1865, (*The Songs of the Streets and the Woods*); *L'Année terrible*, 1872; *L'Art d'être grand-père*, 1877, (*The Art of Being a Grandfather*); *La Pape*, 1878; *La Pitié suprême*, 1879; *L'Ane*, 1880; *Les Quatre Vents de l'esprit*, 1881, (*The Four Winds of the Spirit*); *La Fin de Satan*, 1886; *Toute la lyre*, 1889-1893; *Dieu*, 1891

The name and the work of Victor Hugo fill the whole of the nineteenth century. Hugo the poet has been neglected, although few critics would deny that most modern French poetry has in one way or another been marked by him.

It matters little that one of Hugo's first major collections, *Les Orientales*, seems to have been inspired by his watching the sun set over Paris. Nineteenth century artists were often to turn to the Orient, observed or only imagined, for their inspiration. In France, certainly, where imaginations had been expanded by the Napoleonic adventure, it was hardly surprising that poets and painters should, around 1830, turn their gaze away from the internal political and social scene. Hugo, like others, seems to have sought in the East a sharpness, splendor, and

color that he could not find in the French domestic scene. The technical innovations to be found in *Les Orientales* indicate that Hugo was fully conscious of the severe limitations on French as a language of poetry, compared to other European languages.

In the 1829 collection, many poems are fascinating experiments with rhyme and rhythm, in which Hugo's affection for color, contrast, and movement—later to become legendary—is already obvious. The best-known piece in this collection is undoubtedly "The Djinns." It owes its name to spirits of popular Mohammedan belief, said to be associated both with good and evil, though Hugo considers only their malevolent aspect. "The Djinns" is very obviously conceived as a whole from the first to the last line. It is a

splendidly successful technical experiment. The opening stanza, of two-syllable lines, describes a scene of perfect calm before the approach of the Djinns. Stanza by stanza, the line expands, the pace becomes more rapid, until, to describe the arrival of the Djinns and their full, terrifying fury, Hugo makes use of a ten-syllable line. With the retreat of the spirits, the movement loses pace and volume; in the final strophe, the poet has returned to the two-syllable line; calm has once again fallen over the scene. The poem is fascinating, for it shows what effects could be obtained when a French poet, without losing precision, was prepared to discard outmoded conventions.

While Claude Roy's remark to the effect that Hugo's poetry was a form that eventually found a content seems a little unjust, there is certainly a progression in his work away from brilliance for brilliance' sake towards a realization and expression of deeper patterns of meaning in life. The signs of an evolution may be observed in *Les Feuilles d'automne*. The title is significant, as in the frontispiece of the original edition, showing two men, wrapped in cloaks, crossing a graveyard at sunset. The fundamental problems of life and death, the frailty of man, the unchanging face of nature, and the basic emotions that center around the family are the recurring themes in this volume. One of the finer poems of *Les Feuilles d'automne*, and there are many that are good, is called "When the Child Appears." Here, as is so often the case in other collections, Hugo selects a simple, almost banal, theme and makes out of it a finely executed, moving poem that is not overdone. Characteristically, the poet makes use of contrast throughout this piece, to enhance the impression he wishes to leave, and it closes with a philosophical meditation.

Some general differences are to be found between the collection titled *Les chants du crépuscule*, which appeared in 1835, and the two others that followed it, *Les Voix intérieures* and *Les Rayons et les ombres*. Yet they have much in common.

In all three one notices the more frequent or urgent presence of social or political themes; Hugo's vision of the world now seems wider and deeper than before, and better able to distinguish the general pattern behind the particular example. Everywhere new facets of Hugo's creative genius are to be discovered; his seeking out of new sources for poetry is evident in his lively interest in Napoleon Bonaparte. In "To the Column," Hugo not only traces the history and legend of Napoleon in breath-taking fashion, but reveals a fine talent for taking an inanimate object—in this case the column in the Place Vendôme in Paris—and exploiting all its power as a symbol. His, too, is the gift of bringing to life an extremely precise vision, with great economy, by a judicious choice of a few telling details; and he displays this talent to perfection in "The Cow." He could make himself new in every circumstance, apparently; behind every image he detected an idea, behind every idea an image, and some of his genius may be explained by this ability. Increasingly, Hugo seems to have been attracted by the mysteries of life and death, an attraction especially obvious in *Les Rayons et les ombres*. In "Oceano Nox," which is in this collection, Hugo conveys with great power the idea of nature, in this case the sea, as a force that shows only its surface to man, reveals little while suggesting much:

Where are they, these sailors that foundered
in the darkness of night?

O waves, how many dismal stories you
surely know!

Deep waves, dreaded by mothers down
on their knees!

You tell each other the stories while
coming in on the rising tide,
And that is what gives you these desperate
voices

That you have in the evening when
you come towards us!

The unfortunate or tragic events in Hugo's private and public life in the 1840's divide his life and poetry into two parts. However regrettable these happenings may have been for Hugo the man,

they did serve to restore to the public Victor Hugo the poet. After being exiled from Imperial France in 1851, and finally settling in the Channel Islands, Hugo at last seemed to find the time and energy to take up his pen once more.

In *Les Châtiments*, the first fruit of his exile, Hugo too often fails to hold in check his wrath or indignation at the injustice of Napoleon III. Yet elsewhere, recent misfortunes and grievances act as a catalyst to release a brilliant display of swift, even language or vivid imagery. It would be wrong to condemn Hugo outright for being too closely involved in the movements of upheaval of his century; he was involved, and if this is sometimes a reason why his poetry dates so rapidly, it is also, on occasion, one of the greatest strengths of his verse.

Poems in which the mood is essentially serene find a place alongside the other, angrier ones in *Les Châtiments*. "Stella," for example, recalls similar pieces by Lamartine and Musset. The poet seeks in the sky and sees in Venus, as it stands bright in the midst of darkness, announcing morning, a symbol of light and truth, a promise of a better fate for mankind. The poet of contrasts was to become increasingly, in exile, the visionary, the prophet.

Contemplations is one of the collections for which Victor Hugo's name is best remembered. In it, the poet is truly mature. Not only does he show himself to be in full possession of all the resources of the language, but much suffering seems to have given a new depth and intensity to his thought. The collection is divided into two parts: *Formerly* and *Today*, that is to say poems dating from before and after the death of his daughter Leopoldine. The predominant note that is struck is not one of protest, but rather of resignation. Hugo seems to say, in effect, that without understanding the mysterious workings of God, he accepts them. Nowhere is this more obvious than in "Villequier," an elegy, one of many fine poems dedicated to the memory of Leopoldine:

I come to Thee, Lord! confessing that
Thou art
Good, clement, indulgent, gentle; O
living God!
I acknowledge that Thou alone under-
stand Thy workings,
And that man is nought but a reed
that trembles with the wind. . . .

In an epic series as enormous as *La Légende des siècles*, with its ambitions as great as the title suggests and its intertwining of history, legend, and prophecy, it was perhaps inevitable that Hugo would at times test the patience and credulity of his readers. However, considered individually, the finer poems of this collection bear comparison with the best French poetry can offer. Many critics have admired "As Boaz Lay Sleeping." Every line of this beautiful poem seems to strive toward, and obtain, an effect of fusion and harmony which matches the subject perfectly. Hugo is impressively successful in investing with life a Biblical universe in which past, present, and future are fused, and the thoughts and feelings blend smoothly with the setting:

Ruth was dreaming as Boaz slept; the
grass was black;
The bells of the flocks stirred faintly;
The great goodness of God came down
from the Heavens;
It was the peaceful hour when lions
go to drink.

Les Chansons des rues et des bois, an uneven collection, seemed to announce an appreciable weakening of Hugo's poetic inspiration. In fact, in *L'Art d'être grand-père*, the poet showed himself capable of writing moving, lyrical verse, while in *Les Quatre Vents de l'esprit* he gave a conclusion to a body of thought that had not been completed in a *Légende des siècles*.

Victor Hugo has not by any means been fully understood. The vastness of the man and of his literary production has intimated too many people for too long. Out of the reappraisals that are now at last being made, two conclusions are likely to arise: on the one hand, the full extent of Victor Hugo's influence on the

development of French poetry is probably much greater than has generally been supposed; on the other, it seems certain that one can no longer safely and glibly sum up the poetry of Victor Hugo in a

few words. He did more than think he thought, and it seems certain that his thought cannot be reduced to any simple, single formula.

THE POETRY OF JARRELL

Author: Randall Jarrell (1914-1965)

First published: *Blood for a Stranger*, 1942; *Little Friend, Little Friend*, 1945; *Losses*, 1948; *The Seven-League Crutches*, 1951; *Selected Poems*, 1955; *The Woman at the Washington Zoo*, 1960; *The Lost World*, 1965

By the time of his death, Randall Jarrell had become one of the recognized leading poets in America. His writing includes a satiric novel, *Pictures from an Institution*, two books of essays, literary and social-critical, two children's books, several translations from German works, and seven books of poetry which collect the work of more than twenty years.

Perhaps his most important book was his second, *Little Friend, Little Friend*. These poems, published in 1945, marked the true beginning of his successful career. The book is largely composed of war poems—the title is the repeated name of an airplane—and the best of Jarrell's work on this theme is here. The most famous, possibly because the shortest, of these is "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner."

Some critics have viewed this as a poem dealing with the theme of the individual in the modern world. This interpretation seems removed from the content of the poem, but we can see the line of reasoning which may lead to it: the gunner hunched in the belly of the State, which is also associated with the womb of his mother (see Jarrell's note—"he looked like a foetus in the womb"); the transition is from the apparently prenatal life of dream to the waking "nightmare" of the fighters, a waking which is simultaneous with death. Presumably critics have felt that his epiphanic awakening to the fatal horror of the State symbolizes the general power of the mechanized State to crush out the life of an individual, to press him into dor-

mancy. A less sympathetic critic has said of the poem that the last line, with its matter-of-fact expression of the grotesque, leaves much to be desired; that although horror may be unrelieved in poetry, a fuller vision of the implications of death must be present: the poem stops too soon.

Both of these views hurt the poem. The former finds so much that the poem becomes a sterile, rather trite idea; the latter demands so much that he does not see what is there. For us, the poem is a good capsule summary of three of Jarrell's major themes: death, especially in war; the relationship of mother and child, and childhood in general; and social criticism of the kind that finds prose expression in his essays titled *A Sad Heart at the Supermarket*. Further, one finds in many of Jarrell's poems, as in this one, the exploration and use of dreaming.

"Losses" was published in the 1945 volume, and its title was used for the next book, *Losses*, of 1948. The men killed, as pictured in the poem, were not sufficiently alive, not old enough to have been quite alive; and only at the moment of vision which transcended cities could they die. It is the idea of Keats, that at the most intense moment of life there is death, and at death there is life.

In "The Dead Wingman" death and dream again merge, as a sleeping pilot dreams of searching for his wingman who was shot down. "Fires" is repeated in each of the stanzas, and it is implied that the sleeping pilot's own plane is in trouble; so when we are told only at the end

that the pilot is sleeping, we assume his death. In fact, were it not for Jarrell's explanatory note, this would be the inevitable conclusion. This documentation raises a very real question in evaluating Jarrell's work, for although he insisted that his notes are unnecessary, still they are often quite necessary to the understanding of the poems. Often rather than notes the necessary information is given at the head of the poem: often, as in the last two books, there are no notes and the reader finds that the poems require close concentration. The poet must decide what his poems will be, how self-contained they are, but readers will decide the depth to which they are willing to go in apprehending the whole poem.

"Burning the Letters," which appeared in *Losses*, is one of Jarrell's finest. The wife of a pilot delivers a dramatic monologue to herself while burning his letters to her. A metaphorical equation is presented, that by a Man's (Christ's) death man lives, so by her husband's death she lives. She wants now to disentangle her life and the pilot's death, so she burns the letters and beseeches his grave, the "Great grave of all my years," to bury him. Her memory, not herself, will be his resting place. Specifically Christian associations are rare in Jarrell's poetry, possibly accounting for his apologetic headnote that the woman was formerly a Christian, a Protestant. At the opposite extreme from "Burning the Letters" there are poems which are almost entirely description with little "philosophy." "Pilots, Man Your Planes" from *Losses* is a good example, a simple narration of the ironic destruction of a plane by a fire from its own carrier. The lines are chilling and evocative, as those in which the poet describes the pilot entering his plane and taking off the deck of a carrier.

The transition from the world of death and dreams to the world of childhood is an easy one after the Romantic poets. In fact, "The Skaters," from Jarrell's first book, *Blood from a Stranger*, might remind one of Wordsworth's skaters in *The*

Prelude; the sudden transformation of landscape at the end of "A Game at Salzburg" is likewise Wordsworthian. We should also look to Rilke for influence on the "childhood" poems—Jarrell translated several of them. The title of one book, *The Seven-League Crutches*, itself juxtaposes childish fancy and morbidity. "Come to the Stone . . ." from *Little Friend*, makes several connections with the poetry we have been discussing. A child sees some bombers, asks why people punish people, and answers easily that everything is childlike except his own death. The death of a child is his arrival into manhood. The theme of the poem is not the brutality of war, but the loss of innocence. This theme becomes increasingly important in Jarrell's poetry until, in his 1965 volume, the title suggests the new theme: *The Lost World*. The world lost is that of childhood.

The title poem is roughly pentametric, seldom decasyllabic, as are many of Jarrell's verses; but here we find a rhyme scheme, *terza rima*, very thoroughly hidden. This is an achievement in itself for nearly 250 verses. The poem is a narrative whose viewpoint shifts from childhood to adulthood with Proustian ease. In the opening of the third part the smell of Vicks Vaporub from a factory reminds the adult of the California eucalyptus tree he used to climb—Proust's *madeleine*—just as in the sequel, "Thinking of the Lost World," at the end of the volume the chain of memory is set off by a spoonful of chocolate tapioca. The lost world is associated with classical and Biblical myths, along with the myths of our age: Tarzan, Peter Pan, and science fiction. In the opening lines toy weapons made by the child and his father's coppersmith work remind us of Hephaestus; a play seen by the child becomes Shakespeare's "Green Wood," Crusoe's island, Eden, and at the end he returns to the world of servants and masters, where no one is generous or noble.

This real world is the subject of a third major theme of Jarrell's poetry, the criti-

cism of a mechanized society which has lost the innocence and mythos of childhood. "The State," from *Little Friend*, *Little Friend*, portrays a child accepting fascist encroachment until they take his cat; then the child wants to die. "Sears Roebuck," from *Losses*, is a rare humorous poem: unlucky Honest John, who becomes associated with the John of Patmos, author of Revelation, has a vision of the apocalypse as he falls into a wilderness of women's undergarments in the catalogue. In *The Woman at the Washington Zoo*, the title poem whose creation was detailed in an essay Jarrell wrote for *Understanding Poetry*, is a sharp contrast between the bureaucratic world of Washington and the freedom of the ironically caged animals. The form, like that of "Burning the Letters," is a woman's so-

liloquy—a favorite form of Jarrell's exploited again in this book in "The End of the Rainbow," the confession of a woman who missed her chance in life, who lives in dreams.

Three of the best of the new poems appeared in his children's book *The Bat-Poet*: "The Mockingbird," "Bats," and "The Bird of Night." In these Jarrell avoided two of his major flaws: occasional flatness and a tendency toward philosophizing and intruding ideas prosaically. In this respect *The Lost World* is less frequently faulted than the others, more concerned as a whole with smaller "themes" and tighter form and more careful language, a promise of developing craftsmanship and deeper insights left unfulfilled by the poet's accidental and tragic death.

THE POETRY OF JEFFERS

Author: Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)

Principal published works: *Flagons and Apples* (1912); *Californians* (1916); *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924); *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems* (1925); *The Woman at Point Sur* (1927); *Cawdor and Other Poems* (1928); *Dear Judas and Other Poems* (1929); *Descent to the Dead* (1931); *Thurso's Landing and Other Poems* (1932); *Give Your Heart to the Hawks* (1933); *Solstice and Other Poems* (1935); *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* (1937); *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (1938); *Be Angry at the Sun* (1941); *Medea* (1946); *The Double Axe and Other Poems* (1948); *Hungerfield and Other Poems* 1954; *The Beginning and the End*, 1963

The history of Robinson Jeffers' reputation might be represented diagrammatically by the figure of a sharp, inverted V, the apex marked, perhaps, by the year 1933. In 1919, when Jeffers had already published two volumes, Louis Untermeyer did not consider him worthy of inclusion in his famous anthology of American poetry that mirrored the taste of the period as definitely as had Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* in 1861. In 1933, William Rose Benét, in his anthology titled *Fifty Poets*, spoke of Jeffers as "the Western Titan of our contemporary poetry" and quoted George Sterling's statement that "Jeffers clasps hands with the Great Greeks across Time." In 1950, a critic considered *The Double Axe* beneath critical notice. Today, Jeffers is

neither well remembered nor widely read. Has poetry taken a different direction, or was there some flaw in Jeffers' work, unnoticed thirty years ago, that has slowly caused the disintegration of a reputation once so massive?

Two facts of Jeffers' biography seem important to his poetry: first, his study of medicine and, second, his long residence on the coast of California. The first of these gave him the "scientific" point of view, of which much has been made in discussions of the intellectual content of his poems. The second, his home on Carmel Bay, Tor House, which he built in 1914 and occupied until his death, gave him the geographical, the scenic background of so many of his poems, the rocky coast that "clasped hands," to re-

peat Sterling's phrase, with the stony landscape of ancient Greece and its citadels built from the primeval stone. It might almost be maintained that for Jeffers there existed only these two worlds, the coasts of Greece and of California.

After two false starts, Jeffers made his reputation with *Tamar and Other Poems*, published in 1924, and then continued until 1954, ending with a total of fifteen volumes that spanned a period of forty-two years, surely an impressive achievement. It was, however, on the long narrative poems—long, that is, by modern standards—contained in these volumes that Jeffers' reputation was based: "Tamar," "Roan Stallion," "The Loving Shepherdess," "Give Your Heart to the Hawks," "Hungerfield," and others, at least one of them running to a hundred pages. These works were written in a period when it was said that a long poem was impossible. There is another group equally long: Jeffers' rehandling of the Greek myths, although these myths also often stand in the background of his narratives with modern settings. In "The Tower Beyond Tragedy" he rewrote the Orestes legend; "At the Fall of an Age" is a short drama, the climax of which is the death of Helen; "The Cretan Woman" is based on the *Hippolytus* of Euripides.

A reading of these long narratives, with their setting on the coast of California, or these reworkings of the Greek legends will reveal easily enough the weakness of Jeffers as a poet. His fault was not his utter pessimism, not his utter contempt for humanity. Rather, it was his extremely narrow range, his constant repetition. In this respect, the only modern poet with whom he can be compared is A. E. Housman, who shared Jeffers' tragic view of life, who repeated his theme of the transience of youth and beauty, the peace that comes with death, throughout his two volumes. But Housman had the great virtue of compression; his poems were pared down to three or four quatrains, whereas Jeffers stretched

out the agony for page after page. It can even be said that to read one of his narrative poems is to read them all; they are alike in their preoccupation with drunkenness, lust, incest, and murder. It is not the violence that offends, for violence has become a commonplace in modern literature; it is the sameness, for violence can quite easily become as monotonous as virtuous placidity. We grow weary of drunken, lecherous husbands, of frustrated, rebellious wives, of incestuous relationships. The murders and the incendiaryisms pall. The characters do not seem real, so complete is their degradation. We detect in them the same unreality, the same lack of social or moral sense, that T. S. Eliot found in the characters in Lawrence's fiction. It is not that they are immoral, for immoral characters are perfectly recognizable as human beings; it is that they seem to exist in a world completely devoid of all moral values. Each of these doomed families, although it may live in a perfectly real section of the coast of California and may even have contacts with other families, is shut into a kind of private madhouse where horror is the daily fare. Without indulgence in undue sentimentality, we may say that this state of affairs is not recognizably human.

Nor is it quite accurate to assume that because Jeffers depicted such unrelieved tragedy he was clasping hands with the great Greek writers. To be sure, the Greek myths often stand behind his narrative poems: the Pasiphaë story is discernible in "Roan Stallion"; in "Hungerfield," a woman with the implausible name of Alcmena Hungerfield has a son who wrestles—or thinks he does—with Death, just as the classical Alcmena's son, Herakles, contends with Death in the *Alcestis* of Euripides. But to use the great myths of classical antiquity does not make one a Greek. The tragic narratives of Jeffers are not such in the Aristotelian sense of a reversal of fortune; they do not depict the fall of a great man from the heights of prosperity and happiness to

the depths of misery. The characters in these stories have never known happiness; they are drunken, lecherous, cruel, and degraded. Jeffers' real kinship is not with the Greeks but with the late Elizabethans; he "clasps hands" with such men as Webster and Tournear and, beyond them in time, with Seneca. As the tragedy of blood developed on the post-Shakespearean stage, the dramatists piled murder upon murder, horror upon horror, until the spectator was driven either to disgust or to a refusal to take the drama seriously. The complicated story of "Tamar" is as unreal in its sensationally gruesome details as those of *The Atheist's Tragedy* or *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and it seems as remote from actuality, yet we are asked to accept this nightmare as a story taking place on the California coast today.

In one of his short poems Jeffers said that the sole purpose of poetry is to feel and completely understand natural beauty; and it is in his ability to put into words the wild, primitive loveliness of the area in which he had made his home that Jeffers was at his best as a poet. Despising humanity, he loved nature—the age-old rocks of the California coast, the gulls, and, above all, the hawks. The rock and the hawk were his main symbols: the rock which will remain long after mankind has vanished and the hawk which represents power and freedom. To Jeffers, nature was not the guide, philosopher, and kindly nurse that it was to Wordsworth; it was indifferent to man, who is, after all, only an incident in the vast history of the planet. In one of Jeffers' most quoted lines he said that mankind was the mold from which the world should break away. Again, in writing of the defacing of Carmel Point by a housing development, he added that given time nature knew that what man had created would dissolve. But the granite of the cliff at Carmel will remain. In "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," he gave voices to the stones of which the citadel is built; they speak to one another of

men as loud, boisterous, and mobile, saying that before the world ends man will be gone. Man, as Jeffers saw him, is not merely an animal; he is below the animals, for he is a blight upon the earth. His empires rise and fall; America will fall like the rest, whereas the hawk will still wheel above the cliffs.

Jeffers' medical studies provided him with a certain amount of scientific vocabulary and, perhaps, with his coldly objective view of humanity. One gets the impression of a clinically detached attitude, the attitude of the doctor who has treated so many patients that he can no longer think of them as people. Surely many of the characters in the narrative poems are walking examples from a psychologist's casebook.

In American poetry of this century, Jeffers appears as strictly *sui generis*; he does not fit into any of the recognized schools or influences. Superficially, on the printed page, his long, flowing lines resemble those of Whitman, but the rhythm of his verse is very different from that of the older poet. Except for his general reaction against the conventionalities of the late Victorians, Jeffers was unlike anyone else writing during his period, and he has apparently exerted no influence on the succeeding generation, as have Pound and Eliot.

In *Hungerfield*, Jeffers wrote that poets who forget about the agony of life while singing its praises are fools and liars. The statement is certainly true; yet perhaps Jeffers, in an attempt to avoid all false sentiment, went to the other extreme. He was capable of writing beautiful lines, even beautiful short poems. The weakness was that he never varied, never developed; he merely repeated himself. In "To the Stone-Cutters," the poem which in 1933 he considered his best, he said that eventually man, the earth, and the sun would die, the sun blind of eye, black to the heart. This grim theme of vision and statement rings throughout all of his work.

THE POETRY OF JIMÉNEZ

Author: Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958)

Principal published works: *Almas de violeta*, 1900 (*Violet Souls*); *Rimas*, 1902 (*Rhymes*); *Arias tristes*, 1903 (*Sad Airs*); *Diario de un poeta recién casado*, 1916 (*Diary of a Recently Married Poet*); *Estío*, 1917 (*Summer*); *Sonetos espirituales*, 1917 (*Spiritual Sonnets*); *Eternidades*, 1916-1917 (*Eternities*); *Poesías escogidas*, 1899-1917, 1917 (*Selected Poems*); *Segunda antología poética* 1917-1923, 1922 (*Second Anthology of Poetry*); *Poesía en prosa y verso*, 1923 (*Poetry in Prose and Verse*); *Animal de Fondo*, 1949 (*Brute*); *Tercera antología poética*, 1898-1953, 1957 (*Third Anthology of Poetry*)

One of a group of intellectuals classified as the "Generation of '98" and concerned about Spain's political and literary position following the Spanish-American War, was the Andalusian poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, born in Moguer, near Cádiz, in 1881.

At his father's urging, he had gone to Seville to study law. While there he became interested in poetry and painting, possible reasons why he failed in his studies and returned to Moguer. There occurred an incident that explains much about his later life. One night his sister awakened him to report his father's death. Despite a long illness, the sudden passing was such an emotional shock that Jiménez was filled with presentiments of his own sudden death and continued to have periods of melancholy that several times sent him to a sanatorium.

He wrote much poetry. Submitted to publications in Seville and Madrid, they attracted such attention that poets in the capital, especially Francisco Villaespesa and Rubén Darío founder of a movement called Modernish, invited him to join them in Madrid.

Because Modernism in poetry meant pretty verses, a cult of form, and refined but artificial emotions, one can imagine the sort of verse Jiménez had been writing. His friends encouraged publication. Darío titled one volume *Almas de violetas* (*Violet Souls*) and Villaespesa suggested *Ninfas* (*Waterlilies*) for the second. Both volumes appeared in 1900. Like Rubén Darío, however, Jiménez soon turned his back on many of the ideals of Modernism. Many years later when Gerardo Diego questioned Spain's

outstanding poets about their inspirations, Jiménez listed as his models Luis de Góngora, Rubén Darío, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, and the *Romanceros*, sixteenth century collections of ballads.

Declaring that modern Spanish poetry began with Bécquer, Jiménez now looked for inspiration to the delicately wrought, simply expressed poetry of his acknowledged master. In fact, he called his third volume *Rimas*, the name Bécquer gave to his own poems. His poetic purpose, as Jiménez expressed it, was to give permanence to what he saw and felt was beautiful. To transmit that beauty became a sort of religion. He wrote that what he thought poetic was also deeply religious but not limited by the tenets of any creed.

With his next volume, *Arias tristes* (*Sad Airs*), published in 1903, Jiménez felt he had fully embarked on his career. In fact, later in life he rejected the lyric fire of his early period and directed that nothing published before 1903 be reprinted.

To him, life was a succession of imperishable moments. In 1912 came one of those moments, his meeting with Zenobia Camprubí Aymar, a Vassar graduate, vivacious, intelligent, but not sure that she wanted to marry a poet. When she went to New York to visit her brother, José Camprubí, the founder of *La Prensa*, Jiménez's thoughts followed her and before long he did the same. In *Diario de recién casado* (*Diary of a Recently Married Poet*), published in 1917, he distilled his experience and impressions of his marriage to the woman who was to contribute so much to his career as

a poet. Better than most foreigners, he interpreted the United States in impressionistic word pictures of New York, Boston, and other places. Jiménez called it the first in a new period of his art.

It was followed the same year by other volumes, *Estío* (*Summer*) and *Sonetos espirituales*. Although Jiménez had been reading Irish poets and had translated Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, his experiments in free verse in *Summer* cannot be ascribed to them. The simplicity of the sonnets, full of his obsession with death, represented a departure from the sonorous and brilliant exteriorized sonnets loved by baroque and romantic poets. Jiménez had become an original poet, able to assimilate and transmute.

Eternidades, published in 1916-1917, shows what might be called the intellectual side of his poetry. It contained "Poetry," a much quoted poem in unrhymed lines of six, eight, and ten syllables. It says that poetry garbed in pure innocence first appeared to him, but then changed, and when he did not understand the change to richer dress he became angry. But when he saw her once more, disrobed, a vision of naked purity and as innocent as before, he realized that she was basically the same and forever his.

The purification of poetry, simplicity, the abandonment of any ornamental embellishments, and a freer poetic style which he called "naked poetry"—these became the characteristics of Juan Ramón, as his followers called him. He sought the essence, simplicity attained by the fewest separate elements, as achieved by the ballad writers who appeared in the Spanish *Romancero general* of 1600. But Jiménez added another quality, a delicacy not always found in primitive poetry. The poetry also embodied a sad tone, an authentic melancholy, and not the self-pity of the Romanticists.

Since so much of his poetry had appeared in slight volumes and small editions, in 1917 under the sponsorship of the Hispanic Society of America he completed the first of his collections, *Poesías escogidas, 1899-1917* (*Selected Poetry*). In 1922 appeared *Segunda antología poética 1917-1923*, and in 1957 *Tercera antología poética 1898-1953*. For readers wanting to sample all his styles found in thirty-nine separate volumes, this is the book to consult.

Every time Jiménez reprinted a poem, it had to be carefully scrutinized. Though to him poetry was an inspiration, a wellspring rising from deep within the poet, silently, covertly, yet the poem, once visible, demanded a second inspection before republication. Sometimes he changed a word, or inverted the sentence order; sometimes he changed a title. "Mañana de la cruz" reappeared as "Mañana de la luz." The British critic J. B. Tread tried to explain Jiménez's penchant for revision by saying that the changes from the original text were not intended for smoothness of line or greater clarity of thought, but to relate them more closely to the vision of nature expressed in the whole unified body of his work.

Jiménez believed that the force of nature resides in everything, a mountain or a person that has the life proper for it. So he felt that a poem would live if it were filled with cosmic force.

In 1956 the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to this writer to whom poetry was an end, not a means. He believed in poetic expression for itself and not for its relation to the emotions it tries to express. He could dwell anywhere without having his surroundings interfere with his existence as a poet. Everywhere he could continue his search for absolute Beauty.

THE POETRY OF JOHNSON

Author: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

First published: London, 1738; *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 1749

The poetry of Samuel Johnson is closely related in both content and tone to the rest of his work. His pervasive moral vision of the transitory nature of all human existence and the consequent folly of man's striving for worldly success provides the central themes for his two best known poems, *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, as well as for his oriental fable, *Rasselas*, his Shakespearean criticism, many of his periodical essays, and several of the *Lives of the Poets*. In his verse, as in his prose works, Johnson moves from the treatment of specific incidents to general application of their meaning. His primary interest was always in presenting universal truths, and he chose detailed episodes that he felt would illustrate them.

Like most of the other writers of his day Johnson received his early training in the composition of poetry in school, making verse translations of Latin works; several of these early efforts survive, either in manuscript or in Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, and they show young Johnson as a skilled handler of language, capable of creating dignified, striking lines in his adaptations of Vergil and Horace. His mastery of language was no doubt increased by his lifelong practice of writing original Latin poetry and translating English works into Latin, a language that notoriously demands great precision and exactness.

Johnson's English works include a number of occasional pieces, complimentary verses to ladies, prologues and epilogues to theatrical performances, and elegies for friends and acquaintances; but his reputation as a poet rests squarely on *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, the two long satires modeled on the works of the Roman moralist Juvenal.

The imitation of the classical satire was a popular eighteenth century verse form. The English poet's method was to choose a classical poem whose general premises seemed to him especially applicable to the conditions of his own day,

then to replace specific incidents relating to Roman life with those more relevant to his time. The felicity with which an author could apply his source to present-day conditions and his skill in adapting single lines and phrases marked his success with the genre. The most outstanding imitations are generally considered to be Alexander Pope's Horatian epistles, but Johnson's works rank high.

London, published in 1738, the year in which Pope's brilliant *Epilogue to the Satires* also appeared, is based on the third satire of Juvenal, a condemnation of the evils of life in the city of Rome. Johnson uses Juvenal's general plan to point out the perils and corruption of London, attacking in particular the government of Robert Walpole, the general submission of virtue and honor to greed and flattery, and the degrading effects of poverty. The speaker throughout most of the poem is Thales, identified by some scholars as Richard Savage, a minor writer who is remembered chiefly as the subject of Johnson's first biography. Thales, accompanied to Greenwich by his friend, the author of the poem, is embarking for Wales; he can no longer bear to live amidst the corruptions of the city, and he attacks it as he explains his reasons for leaving. Johnson pictures himself as sympathetic with Thales' views: "I praise the hermit, but regret the friend."

Much of the power of the satire in the poem derives from Johnson's use of the heroic couplet for sharp, abrupt, ironic effects in such lines as these:

By numbers here from shame or censure
free,
All crimes are safe, but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling
muse.

Sometimes contrast in the relative seriousness of the two lines of the couplet provides the effect:

Their ambush here relentless ruffians
lay,

And here the fell attorney prowls for
 prey;
 Here falling houses thunder on your
 head,
 And here a female atheist talks you
 dead.

While the greater part of the poem consists of direct attacks on contemporary vices, Johnson alludes to chapters in England's past to underline the faults of the present age. There is a brief tribute to Elizabeth I as the poet sets the scene in Greenwich, her birthplace, which calls to mind the "blissful age" when England triumphed over Spain, "Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,/Or English honour grew a standing jest." A reference to the spirit of Edward III, one of England's great military heroes, evokes scorn for "the warrior dwindled to a beau . . . of France the mimic, and of Spain the prey," and the mention of the victories of Henry V underlines the folly of imitating the vices of the French immigrants who have flocked to London.

While Johnson generally confines his attack on specific vices to a couplet or two, there are a few extended satirical portraits that provide an effective change of pace. In the latter part of the poem he describes the fortunes of the pompous and powerful Orgilio, a character taken directly from Juvenal. This unfortunate man's home is destroyed by lightning, but before many days pass flatterers and hangers-on have provided for his new estate treasures far surpassing those he lost. This description is followed immediately by an idyllic account of a country estate, available "for less than rent the dungeons of the Strand," where the landholder may enjoy nature, garden, and dwell in peace and security.

The satirical gifts shown by Johnson in *London* are developed to a far greater extent in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, published eleven years later. In this work Johnson exercised more freedom in departing from his model, Juvenal's tenth satire, and consequently he created a more coherent work than the earlier

poem. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is not directed so completely at specific abuses as *London* was; the theme, expressed in the title, lent itself to a more general treatment. In the introductory passage Johnson points out the futility of all human undertakings in every corner of the globe, emphasizing his assertion with imagery of mist, clouds, and mazes. After commenting on the universal evils of wealth, "the gen'ral massacre of gold," the uselessness of the quest for military and political power, and the shaky foundations of fame and adulation from the multitude, he relates the histories of several famous men. Cardinal Wolsey's fate is seen as a kind of parable. At the peak of his career this man held "law in his voice, and fortune in his hand," but when the favor of his sovereign changed, "with age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd, he seeks the refuge of monastic rest."

Another specific illustration is the career of the scholar, one which Johnson knew well. If a "young enthusiast" can escape the perils of doubt, praise, difficulty, novelty, sloth, tempting beauty, disease, and melancholy, there await for him "toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail." Archbishop Laud, executed by Cromwell's forces, reached the pinnacle of scholarly achievement, the archbishopric of Canterbury, then "fatal learning leads him to the block."

The last of Johnson's examples of the fleeting nature of all human achievements is the account of Charles XII of Sweden, who won great military victories until his encounter with a superior Russian army. He died an ignominious death in a later conflict, and Johnson makes this comment on the significance of his life:

He left the name, at which the world
 grew pale,
 To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

Shunning material advantages, other men desire long life, but there is no happiness in that course, either:

Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,
And shuts up all the passages of joy.

Even when a man has been blessed throughout the prime of his life, he must face the end. Again Johnson combines general judgments with specific examples for great effect:

In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise!
From Marlborough's eyes the streams
of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

Even beauty can be a bane rather than a blessing: "Sedley [mistress of James II] curs'd the form that pleas'd a king."

Johnson concludes his poem by asking, then answering the question that inevitably arises from so pessimistic a view as his:

Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?

The only possible solution, in his view, is to trust in God:

Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure, what'er he gives, he gives the best.

The gifts that make life tolerable, those for which men must pray, are love, patience, and faith.

The variety of both tone and subject matter in Johnson's numerous shorter poems is vast. His "Prologue spoken by David Garrick at the Opening of the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane" is a judicious, stately survey of the decline of the English stage from the time of "Immortal Shakespeare" to the mid-eighteenth cen-

tury. A collection of brief verses shows a number of complimentary lyrics addressed, apparently extemporaneously, to various ladies on their playing a spinet, plucking a laurel, or celebrating a birthday. One of the wittiest of these pieces is a clever tribute to the poet's friend, "To Mrs. Thrale on her Completing her Thirty-fifth Year," a *tour de force* of brief lines and amusing rhymes:

Of in Danger yet alive
We are come to Thirty-five;
Long may better Years arrive,
Better Years than Thirty-five;
Could Philosophers contrive
Life to stop at Thirty-five,
Time his Hours should never drive
O'er the Bounds of Thirty-five.

One of the most moving of Johnson's minor works is the poem "On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet," a mild, kindly, undistinguished man whom the poet had loved and respected. The simplicity of the stanza and the language mirrors the character of the man:

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind;
Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny
Thy praise to merit unrefin'd.

Johnson's poetic gifts are not sparkling, immediately striking ones, but the dignity, the appropriateness, and the wisdom of his works are lastingly satisfying. Johnson had an almost infallible sense of decorum; his lines are not often beautiful or remarkably original, but they are almost never, if ever, unsuitable. He successfully avoids the lapses in taste that plagued many of his contemporaries and conveys those truths he discovered about life in language that rewards continued rereading.

THE POETRY OF JONSON

Author: Ben Jonson (1573?-1637)

First published: *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, 1616 (Containing *Epigrammes* and *The Forrest*); *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson. The Second Volume*, 1640 (Containing *The Under-wood* and *Horace, His Art of Poetrie*); *Ben Jonson's Execration against Vulcan. With divers Epigrams by the same Author to severall Noble Personages*

in this Kingdome, 1640; Q. Horatius Flaccus: His Art of Poetry. Englished by Ben Jonson. With other Workes of the Author never Printed before, 1640

Ben Jonson was an overpowering individual. People who knew him were rarely neutral: they liked him, some almost to idolatry, or they disliked him with an intensity that vibrates through the centuries. His vigorous personality intrudes and makes dispassionate appraisal of his poetry difficult. A second factor which interferes with cool judgment of his work is the time-hallowed tradition of contrasting portraits of Shakespeare and Jonson. In these conventional portraits, Shakespeare stands for genius, humanity, and native woodnotes; Jonson for labor, bookish pedantry, and classical imitation. It is ironic that one of Jonson's two most popular poems is the noble tribute to his supposed bitter rival.

Unlike Shakespeare—who may or may not have unlocked his heart with his sonnets, but certainly left posterity little personal allusion in his other writings—Jonson wrote to and about many people who had a share in his life. He had been classified as primarily an occasional poet, except in his dramatic works. Perhaps his earliest extant poem is a brief lament on the death of his six-month-old daughter Mary:

Whose soule heavens Queene, (whose
name shee beares)
In comfort of her mothers teares,
Hath plac'd amongst her virgin-
traine. . . .

The distinguished scholar C. H. Herford pointed out the poem's indebtedness to Martial, who wrote an epigram on the death of a small slave girl, Erotion; however, it is more deeply indebted to medieval Christian tradition than to the classics.

Jonson left two other moving poems on the deaths of children: "On my first Sonne," which contains the couplet:

Rest in soft peace, and, ask'd, say here
doth lye
Ben. Jonson his best piece of poet-
rie . . .

and the "Epitaph on S. P.," which tells of the death of a boy actor who acted old men so well that he deceived the Fates. Though prematurely and mistakenly carried away from earth, Heaven has vowed to keep him. The personal note is also sounded in the epigram "To William Camden," the poet's former schoolmaster:

Camden, most reverend head, to whom
I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know,
(How nothing's that?) to whom my
countray owes
The great renowne, and name where-
with shee goes,
Then thee the age sees not that thing
more grave,
More high, more holy, that shee more
would crave. . . .

This high praise is less extravagant than the uninitiated might think, for Camden, formerly a promising fellow student of Sir Philip Sidney, was a poet, an antiquarian praised by Edmund Spenser, and a leading historian and geographer of his country. His works are still mined by scholars. Several of his pupils became important and influential men. He fired Jonson with enthusiasm for scholarship and poetry.

One of Jonson's fairly early poems was an "Ode *Allegorike*" prefixed to Hugh Holland's *Pancharis*. This poem pays a tribute to a former fellow student under Camden. It portrays Holland as a black swan and foreshadows the more famous poem on the Swan of Avon. It also points the way to passages in Milton's "Lycidas" and John Dryden's odes. Jonson's fondness for the ode as a literary type began early in his career and continued into his old age; one of his most ambitious poetic efforts is a Pindaric ode in memory of Sir Henry Morrison, friend of Lord Falkland, noblest of the Sons of Ben. Sir Henry was killed in 1629, eight years before Jonson's death. This impressive ode

is best remembered for a single strophe, often quoted out of context as a separate lyric:

It is not growing like a tree
In bulke, doth make man better bee;
Or standing long an Oake, three hundred yeare,
To fall a logge, at last, dry, bald, and seare:
A Lillie of a Day,
Is fairer farre, in May,
Although it fall, and die that night;
It was the Plant, and flowre of light.
In small proportions, we just beauties see:
And in short measures, life may perfect bee.

The Forrest in the 1616 Folio of Jonson's works contains fifteen poems, three of which are connected with the Sidney family. Like his master Camden, Jonson obviously had great admiration for Sir Philip Sidney as author and man. One of the poems is a somewhat playful birthday ode written to Sir William Sidney, the youthful nephew of Sir Philip and son of Sir Robert, who became Earl of Leicester. Another is an "Epistle to Elizabeth Countesse of Rutland," the daughter of Sir Philip; and the third is "To Penshurst," a favorite of many Jonsonians. This last piece, more than a hundred lines long, begins with praise of the austere architecture of the building to which the poem is addressed, proceeds to admiration of its natural setting and its resources for hunters and fishermen, pays graceful compliments to members of the family who have dwelt therein (including Sir Philip himself), and honors the present family for its hospitality and graciousness and for the deserved love of the neighbors and retainers. Particularly, in the final portion, the satirist shows his face and makes clear that not all the nobility share the qualities of Sir Robert Sidney and his wife. This poem is representative of many tributes to noble and prominent individuals, though the literary device of addressing the building instead of the persons is unusual. Especially

notable among the numerous commendatory pieces are those written to noble ladies, since Jonson is often portrayed as a misogynist.

The poet also wrote tributes to many who made their marks in the arts rather than in politics or worldly affairs. The most famous of these poems is the majestic "To the Memory of my Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare," included in the Shakespeare First Folio. The late Hazelton Spencer praised this as the finest occasional poem in the English language. Although this praise may be somewhat extravagant, the poem, like "To Penshurst," is a noble composition with several themes harmoniously unified. It contains epithets which have become part of the English inheritance: "Marlowes mighty line . . . Thundering Æschilus . . . the merry Greeke, tart Aristophanes . . . neat Terence, witty Plautus . . . sweet Swan of Avon . . . Soule of the Age"; and it contains prophetic utterances not bettered by the idolaters of Shakespeare:

Thou art a Moniment without a tombe,
And art alive still, while thy Booke doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give . . .
Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to shewe,
To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!

In spite of Jonson's numerous poems of praise, many critics think of him primarily as a savage satirist and consider his satires as personal as his other poems. He did indeed have an acid gift of irony or downright invective. It is worth noting, however, that his poems attacking individuals by name are excluded from the collections of verse he himself published. In these, like Swift, he chose to lash the vice but spare the name. Undoubtedly his most masterful handling of satire is in his plays rather than in his poems; but there is strong mutual influence between his "comicall satyre" and his satirical

poems. No doubt he heightened his satirical characterizations with traits borrowed from individuals; but the nineteenth century tendency to identify every satirical portrait with a living individual was unsound, and happily seems to have subsided. Sometimes in the poems, though not in the First Folio, the object of the attack is named: Alexander Gill, son of John Milton's schoolmaster, and Inigo Jones, the King's architect and Jonson's collaborator on the masques, are lashed by name. True, in both cases the provocation was great.

In "An Execration upon Vulcan" the poet attacks the fire god with mock fury. He lists works destroyed by a fire (probably in 1623), including some of his own compositions and manuscripts borrowed from antiquarian friends. He takes advantage of the incident to list also works which thoroughly deserved the fire: flamboyant romances, popular journals, alchemic and mystical writings, and extravagantly artificial verses. The poet's good-humored fortitude under adversity serves as a warning to take his strictures with a grain of salt: he probably read with pleasure many of the works he suggested were fit food for Vulcan, including those in "the learned Librarie of Don Quixote."

Jonson wrote a number of translations and adaptations of classical writers; but he had a way of making such works his own. The most famous so-called translation by Jonson is the love lyric "To Celia" ("Drink to me only with thine eyes"). This song, with its combined appeal of music and words (the origin of the music is disputable), has retained its popularity for centuries. It is not really a translation, but a pulling together of scattered prose sentences from the *Epistles* of the Greek rhetorician Philostratus (c. 170-245); these passages are combined and transformed into a unified poem, a new and original piece.

This lyric is but one of many written by Jonson to be sung, not merely read. Music for many of them still survives.

The poet's collaboration with musicians of his day and his familiarity with musical techniques shaped many of the lyrics. Eccho's song in *Cynthia's Revels* begins:

Slow, slow, fresh fount, keepe time
with my salt teares;
Yet slower, yet, O faintly gentle
springs:
List to the heavy part the musique
beares. . . .

The same play contains another of Jonson's popular lyrics, "The Hymn to Diana (Cynthia)":

Queene, and Huntresse, chaste, and
faire,
Now the Sunne is laid to sleepe,
Seated in thy silver chaire,
State in wonted manner keepe:
Hesperus intreats thy light,
Goddesse, excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare it selfe to interpose;
Cynthias shining orbe was made
Heaven to cleere, when day did close:
Blesse us then with wished sight,
Goddesse, excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearle apart,
And thy cristall-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddesse, excellently bright.

Another of the songs which still has life on the concert stage is "Have you seen but a bright lily grow?"

In the masques there are a number of songs with the flavor of nursery rhymes or folk poetry. Three of these are:

CATCH

(from *Oberon*)

Buz, quoth the blue Flie,
Hum, quoth the Bee:
Buz, and hum, they crie,
And so doe wee.

In his eare, in his nose,
Thus, doe you see?
He eat the dormouse,
Else it was hee.

CHARM

(From *The Masque of Queens*)

The owle is abroad, the bat, and the
toad,
And so is the cat-a-mountayne,
The ant, and the mole sit both in a
hole,
And frog peepes out o' the fountayne;
The dogs, they doe bay, and the tim-
brels play,
The spindle is now a turning;
The moone it is red, and the starres are
fled,
But all the skie is a burning: . . .

SONG

(From *The Gypsies Matamorphosed*)

The faery beame upon you,
The starres to glisten on you;
A Moone of light,
In the noone of night,
Till the Fire-drake hath o're gon you.
The wheele of fortune guide you,
The Boy with the bow beside you
Runne aye in the way,
Till the bird of day,
And the luckier lot betide you.

In his lament for his daughter, Jonson demonstrated at an early date his interest in religious themes. This interest lasted throughout his career, for his longest, perhaps his last, original non-dramatic poem, "Elegie on my Muse," (the ninth poem in *Eupheme*, a memorial to Lady Venetia Digby) is steeped in the traditions of medieval Christianity. In "An Execration upon Vulcan" Jonson lists among the works lost in his fire:

. . . twice-twelve-yeares stor'd up hu-
manitie,
With humble Gleanings in Divinitie;
After the Fathers, and those wiser
Guides
Whom Faction had not drawne to
studie sides.

The fruits of this twenty-four-year period of religious study are scattered through the poet's works. In "The Forrest," published in the 1616 Folio edited by Jonson himself, appears a poem in the penitential tradition with a highly personal tone:

"To Heaven." The collection of poems called "The Under-wood" in the 1640 Folio (published three years after Jonson's death) opens with three "Poems of Devotion": "The Sinners Sacrifice," "A Hymne to God the Father," and "A Hymne on the Nativitie of my Saviour." All three of these pieces are in subject matter and form much like the penitential poems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A brief quotation from each will show its quality:

All-gracious God, the Sinners sacrifice,
A broken heart thou wert not wont
despise,
But 'bove the fat of rammes, or bulls,
to prize

An offering meet,
For thy acceptance. O, behold me right,
And take compassion on my grievous
plight.
What odour can be, then a heart con-
trite,

To thee more sweet?

Heare mee, O God!
A broken heart
Is my best part:
Use still thy rod,
That I may prove
Therein, thy Love.

I sing the birth, was borne to night,
The Author both of Life, and light;
The Angels so did sound it,
And like the ravish'd Sheep'erds said,
Who saw the light, and were afraid,
Yet search'd, and true they found it.

In summary, much of Jonson's non-dramatic poetry is personal; much of it is grounded in his learning, particularly his classical learning; but much of it escapes the limitations laid down by critics of the past. Although it leaves an impression of considerable *variety*, it is, on the whole, poetry of statement rather than poetry of suggestion. When it is difficult to understand, the difficulty usually lies in linguistic changes wrought by three centuries or in stylistic compression, rather than in far-fetched imagery or vague mysticism. Though it is intellectual po-

etry, it is far from empty of feeling. Its influence on later poetry, particularly

that of the Cavaliers and Dryden and Pope, was potent.

THE POETRY OF KIPLING

Author: Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

First published: *Departmental Ditties*, 1886; *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses*, 1890; *The Seven Seas*, 1896; *Recessional and Other Poems*, 1899; *The Five Nations*, 1913; *Puck of Pook's Hill*, 1906; *Rewards and Fairies*, 1910; *The Years Between*, 1919; *Sixty Poems*, 1939; *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (definitive edition), 1940

Kipling began writing poetry in 1876 at the age of eleven; sixty years later he was forgotten, mistrusted, or despised for his popularity that had begun with *Departmental Ditties* fifty years earlier. Kipling's early success led to the Nobel Prize and his rejection of the Order of Merit, to be followed by later obloquy; today he is honestly respected for his short stories but still reluctantly for his verse, in spite of the selection of his poetry edited by T. S. Eliot in 1941. Yet Kipling is remembered most for his poems—"Recessional," "Gunga Din," "Mandalay," "The Land," "Danny Deever," "The 'Mary Gloster'" —and for such quotable lines as these from "The Ladies":

... The Colonel's Lady and Judy
O'Grady

Are sisters under their skins!

The inescapable fact remains that if poetry is memorable speech, Kipling had the gift, used it, and was loved for it. He was the latest and the most prolific of the popular poets and perhaps the last in this century. His popularity came from his felicitous handling of the lolling and hence memorable meters of anapest and dactyl, his wide range of novel, picturesque material, and his clear distinction in each poem between right and wrong. The lack of depth in his perceptions is balanced by the strength of his convictions and emotions. His material gave a voice or at least an echo to the people from whom it was drawn, and his easy superficiality of form and content made those people, generally at an elementary or largely oral level of literacy, read him

eagerly and quote him frequently. His well-known "If" is an example of his popular, didactic appeal. This is not the whole of Kipling, but it is essential in the ballad-laureate of Empire.

The sources of Kipling's style are the ballad, the music-hall song, and the Psalms. The last gives him the long, prophetic line in which he sent home the dispatches in verse from the outskirts of the British Empire. Much more of his verse is accompanied by the choruses which perform the same iterative function. The ballads, of which "Sestina of the Tramp-Royal," is typical, are among his simplest and best though not most memorable verse, such as the quietly noble ballad stanzas of "The Veterans," written for "the gathering of survivors of the Indian Mutiny" in 1907, or the gentle raillery of "The Three-Decker." Many poems depend on prologues and epilogues set in italics which bring the poem round to a repetition of the opening lines, again for emphasis. The most characteristic feature of his verse is its introduction not so much of clichés like "the White Man's Burden" in a poem of that title (addressed with considerable foresight to America) but of foreign terms. There are too many of these in the Indian poems, in which the Anglo-Indian is showing off to his British cousins: "all along of abbynay, kul, an' hazar-ho"; but a large number of poems stemming from the South African war and the larger number celebrating British regiments use native and military terms easily, such as *kopje* and *voorlooper* in "Two Kopjes." The worst feature of the verse is the hackneyed

Cockney that his private soldiers speak; this dialect sounds better in prose.

A curious feature of Kipling's work is that he published in a unique form, most of his volumes combining stories and poems, sometimes with the same titles, such as "The Benefactors." Both are so related in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, which contains ten stories and sixteen poems that it is a moot point whether his poems can be considered apart from the stories they illustrate (the subtitles often refer to these) or the events they celebrate, as in "The Rowers: 1902: When Germany Proposed that England should help her in a Naval Demonstration to collect debts from Venezuela." At least once his topicality misfired. "The Ballad of the 'Clampherdown'" records the boarding of a cruiser in battle; it was intended to mock the notion of boarding but was taken as Kiplingesque exaltation of the good old days.

Kipling's range of material was in facts, not ideas. The occupations of the folk heroes of his ballads, from the water-carrier in "Gunga Din" to the ship's engineer in "McAndrew's Hymn" to the Viceroy of India in "One Viceroy Reigns: Lord Dufferin to Lord Landsdowne," are exalted as the cogs of Empire, without his realizing, as George Orwell later pointed out, that an empire exists to preserve and extend an imbalance of trade.

Kipling's first success came when he told inside stories about the Indian Civil Service, for which his father worked, and in the next volume about the Indian Army: the materials were new in literature, the attitudes perhaps necessarily romantic as in the similar pioneer work of Bret Harte. Kipling mocks those who get promotion to the top of the ladder in the first volume and exults in the code and lore of subalterns and privates at the bottom of the scale in the second. When he turns later to English affairs, his preference is not for the artisan but for the traditional yeoman, for the Hobdens of "The Land"; he alternately scolds and

praises the leaders and people of England as they falter in or carry out their manifest destiny of guiding mankind, his deepest contempt being reserved for the mob and the inept leaders, as in "The Islanders," whom he blamed when the balance of trade evened and began to shift the other way after World War I. Kipling was born and bred on the British frontier where the issues were simplified, and his poems show his continual interest not only in India but also in South Africa, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as in "The Parting of the Columns" and "The Song of the Cities," stanzas on sixteen capitals of the Empire in four continents; he responded to the stimulus at the margin of Empire but found the heart of it, London, too sophisticated for his abilities and too preoccupied to heed his strident warnings.

He works mainly in the buffer area between the real center of imperial power and its subjects, often relating Eastern tales but mainly concerned with "the far-flung battle-line" between the civilized and the savage (English and fuzzy-wuzzy) and the "dominion over palm and pine" of "Recessional." But the buffer area is the meeting place of semi-civilized and semi-savage which accounts for the brutality of one and the nobility of the other. Orwell's termed this "colonial literature." His phrase is accurate if one remembers that the Roman "colonus" was a military settler on the Roman imperial frontier. Here the distinctions between right and wrong are expressed in physical, not ethical force, though a simple insular ethic lies behind them.

Kipling was always conscious of the greater mass of Empire behind him whether he was confronting the Indian or the English native, and the greater is always to be imposed on the lesser; he sings the greatness of Empire in many poems. This is frontier-bred psychology always at odds with its environment whether it be the native civilization surrounding the proconsul or the settled life at "Home." Consequently Kipling's most dated poems

show not his glorification of Empire but his continual hectoring of those who do not respond to his own vision of the "far-flung, fenceless prairie" as in "The Native-Born," or the "Never-never country . . . behind the ranges," which in "The Explorer" becomes "God's present to our nation." He is at his best when the glorification is not an oratorio on a set occasion but a lyric like "Mandalay," or when he uses the first person plural as in "The Lesson"—"We have had an Imperial lesson. It may make us an Empire yet."—and not the second person pronoun, as in "The Islanders"—"then was your shame revealed, At the hands of a little people, few but apt in the field."

Kipling's metier was light journalistic verse; it became awkwardly and strenuously didactic when he used it as a vehicle for the urgent lessons he was trying to teach the English before it was too late, and his chief enemy was apathy and ignorance about the enormous area and populations under the control of a ruling race on a small and distant island. If the authority of the knowledge he claimed turned to bullying, the sense of inescapable service was often elevated to sacrifice; he rejoices when a British Army Sergeant, "Whatsisname," reforms the Egyptian Army ("Pharoah and the Sergeant"), or when, as in "Two Kopjes," the British Army at last learns how to fight the Boer. Kipling weeps for the young men sent abroad untrained and forgotten, as in his commemoration of the veterans of the charge of the Light Brigade in "The Last of the Light Brigade." His greatest success was "The Absent-Minded Beggar," set to music and making over a quarter million pounds for the relief of the dependents of the British Tommy.

Amid the sprawl of his topics over time and space and the hustle of his many me-

ters in hundreds of poems, it is difficult to find any guiding philosophy except a belief in the job well done. He had the pride of his own craft, and several of his best poems illuminate that craft: "The Story of Ung," the dissatisfied Neolithic cave painter; "The Conundrum of the Workshops," in which the Devil insists, "Is it Art?"; the famous "nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays" in "In the Neolithic Age." Apart from an occasional lyrical response to nature, as in "The Way Through the Woods" and a frequent response to English history, his poetry is of the world of military and political affairs and sometimes that of other men who know their job: Noah in "A Truthful Song," the smugglers in "A Smuggler's Song," a colonial farmer in "The Settler," the Boer farmer-fighter in "Piet," the Sudanese in "Fuzzy-Wuzzy," the self-made shipping magnate of his dramatic monologue, "The 'Mary Glosster.'" The smaller the object, the sharper is his observation ("The Sergeant's Wedding"); conversely, as the object of his poetic interest enlarged Kipling hated it, as he hates "The People" in "MacDonough's Song." His complementary belief in the competence of the lesser object against the greater mass is rarely defined, but it lies in the body of his own verse, the "tribal lays" in which, as in life, "The Gods of the Copybook Headings" provide all the answers before a man begins his task. From that given base all Kipling had to do was to attack inefficiency and novelty and to glorify the difficult work of the laboring few, Kipling among them, against the many. For his mass he used the British Empire at its apogee; his individual hero is "Thomas Atkins," the British Regular soldier to whom he formally dedicated *Barrack-Room Ballads* and, in spirit, all his work.

THE POETRY OF LAFORGUE

Author: Jules Laforgue (1860-1887)

Principal published works: *Les Complaintes*, 1885; *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune*, 1886; *Derniers Vers*, 1890; *Le Sanglot de la Terre*, 1903

Although Jules Laforgue's span of creative activity was tragically brief (about nine years), his poetry attests a prolific and versatile innovator whose artistic evolution carried him from the traditional Alexandrines and somewhat oratorical poems of the posthumous *Le Sanglot de la Terre*, written between 1878 and 1882, to experimentation with the rhythm and mood of *chansons populaires* in *Les Complaintes*, and culmination in *Derniers Vers* with the frequent use of free verse and with what Laforgue described as psychology in dream form presented in melodic and rhythmic patterns of verse.

"Funeral March for the Death of the Earth," the most celebrated of the poems found in *Le Sanglot de la Terre*, reveals a young poet who is not adverse to indulging in an uninhibited display of his personal views and to capitulating to a rather bleak pessimism concerning the state of the universe; the poet's cries of despair as he depicts bombastically the horrors of civilization and the corpse of the Earth are rarely muted, as they will be in succeeding works. Certain lines ("The nocturnal silence of echoless calm,/Floats, an immense and solitary wreck") are reminiscent of Baudelaire, the precursor of Symbolist poetry whose spell and sphere of influence were ubiquitous in the late nineteenth century.

One of the most distinctive qualities of Laforgue's own personal manner appears with effectiveness in *Les Complaintes*: the poet cultivates a witty and mocking detachment as an antidote to the blunt expression of personal feelings. The theme of death recurs often in Laforgue, but it is not personified as a sinister figure in "Complaint about Forgetting the Dead"; Laforguean irony changes death into the "good gravedigger" who scratches at the door, and if you refuse to welcome him,

If you can't be polite,
He'll come (but not in spite)
And drag you by your feet
Into some moonlit night!

The "complaints," named for a folk-song style which the poet imitates, also reveal a flair for inventing humorous anecdotes and dialogues couched in colloquial language; a case in point is the "Complaint of the Outraged Husband," an amusing conversation in verse form which takes place between an irate husband, who insists he saw his wife flirting with an officer in church, and his wife, who maintains with injured innocence that she was piously conversing with a "life-size Christ."

A predilection for creation of a cast of characters and for dramatization of experience remains a permanent characteristic of Laforgue's style; it reappears most notably in 1886 in the form of a verse drama called *The Faerie Council*. This work, which again demonstrates the poet's preference for depersonalized expression of his sentiments, places on stage the Gentleman, who bemoans the indifference of the cosmos and the tedium of existence, and the Lady, who offers her charms as a cure for his ennui. The subject is typically Laforguean; love is painted as lacking in glamor, as being somewhat sordid, but it is still an acceptable escape from the disenchanting realities of the world. The structure of this verse drama, as in many of Laforgue's poems, presents an ironical commentary on experience, since a certain frame of mind is developed in the course of the drama and then negated at the end; the Earth is round "like a pot of stew" and we are mired in its banalities; but, since this is all men can possess, acceptance of our lot is preferable to some sort of impassioned and futile revolt ("Why don't you see that that is truly our Earth!/And

all there is! and the rest is nothing but tax/About which you might just as well relax!") Gaiety and disdain are the prevailing moods of Laforgue in preference to bitterness and melancholy.

Perhaps the most startling and engaging product of Laforgue's imagination is to be found in the collection entitled *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune*. This work contains a gallery of "choir-boys of the Moon," all of whom are named Pierrot. These bizarre individuals prefer lunar landscapes because the moon seems to symbolize aspiration to some absolute, whether it be savoring the love of an ideal and idealized female, or giving in to the temptation of suicide and blissful nothingness. However, the thirst for self-extinction inevitably ends with an antithetical declaration of a prosaic determination to enjoy the present moment:

—Of course! the Absolute's rights are
nil
As long as the Truth consists of living.

Clowns are a favorite source of inspiration for modern painters and poets; few are more individualized and appealing than the Pierrots of Laforgue. They are uniformly white except for a black skull-cap and a scarlet mouth:

It's, on a stiff neck emerging thus
From similarly starched lace,
A callow under cold-cream face
Like hydrocephalic asparagus.

The eyes are downed in opium
Of universal clemency,
The mouth of a clown bewitches
Like a peculiar geranium.

Parenthetically, it is worth noting that Ezra Pound was struck by the phrase "like hydrocephalic asparagus" and, in general, by Laforgue's frequent reliance upon a scientific lexicon to revivify patterns of poetic expression. In this domain also, the French poet stands out as an important innovator.

The Pierrots, who "feed on the absolute, and sometimes on vegetables, too," are distinguished not only by their acute awareness of death and by their refusal to

seek solace and protection from their fate, but also by the inexplicable spell they cast over the opposite sex. They rhapsodize extravagantly when they talk of love, but they speak "with toneless voices." As amusing embodiments of contradictory elements, they offer another example of Laforgue's irony. In addition, the portraits of these "dandies of the Moon" permit Laforgue to assume an imaginary identity and expound behind a mask a blasé and mocking view of love, life, and death.

Laforgue was one of the first poets in the nineteenth century to exploit successfully the possibilities of the free verse form. "Solo by Moonlight" in *Derniers Vers* is an excellent illustration of his talent for molding the length of the verse line to conform to the flow of thought and the association of images: stretched out on top of a stagecoach moving rapidly through a moonlit countryside, the poet's composure, as well as his body, is jolted, for he remembers a promising love that ended in misunderstanding; the rhythm and mood are partially created by the lines of radically different length. At the same time, the poem is infused with a dream-like atmosphere; impressions are nebulous and the woman is only briefly glimpsed and partially understood as the poet attempts to recall the past. The theme of frustrated love is left purposely ambiguous and contributes to the evocation of psychology in dream form; a kind of paralysis engendered by boredom and a vague malaise prevented the poet from declaring himself; a simple gesture would have elicited a warm response in the woman but,

Ennui was keeping me exiled,
Ennui which came from everything. So.

Familiar themes recur in *Derniers Vers*; "The Coming Winter" is a poem on autumn which suggests encroaching deterioration and imminent death. However, startling verbal juxtapositions help avert dangers of overstatement and sentimentalism ("Rust gnaws the kilometeric spleens/Of telegraph wires on highways

no one passes") and Laforgue's sense of humor remains very much in evidence ("Oh! the turns in the highways,/And without the wandering Little Red Riding Hood . . .").

In the foreword to Patricia Terry's translations of a selected number of Laforgue's poems Henri Peyre notes the debt which numerous French writers of

imposing stature owe to Laforgue's original handling of irony, of versification, of imagery, and of colloquial language. At the same time, along with Verlaine, his example has inspired composers as different as Schonberg, Milhaud, and Ibert. In addition he influenced with profound effect the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Hart Crane.

THE POETRY OF LAMARTINE

Author: Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869)

Principal published works: *Poetic Meditations*, 1820; *Poetic and Religious Harmonies*, 1830; *Jocelyn*, 1836

As a young man, Lamartine's first literary attempts were in the area of the epic and the drama. In 1848, after the Revolution of that year, Lamartine was made head of the provisional government of France. His liberal sympathies were known throughout the nation, and he was immensely popular. Yet it is neither as an epic poet, nor as a dramatist, nor still less as a politician that Lamartine is best known. His lasting fame has depended principally on his *Poetic Meditations*, lyrical elegies about love and nature, life and God.

The French public had no doubts about the originality of the *Poetic Meditations* when they first appeared in 1820. They had a resounding success; added to by Lamartine, they later ran into many editions. It is worth recalling that at this time, with the extension of public education, first by the men of the Revolution, then by Napoleon, it was possible to reach a much wider public than had ever before been the case. This factor needs to be cited in a consideration of the literature of the period. To a public living with the memory of Napoleonic splendor, yet tired of wars; with a great appetite for literature, while scarcely intellectual, Lamartine's idealistic poetry of spirituality and sensibility appealed greatly.

By his dates, Lamartine may be situated among the French Romantics. In fact, his themes are the eternal themes

of poetry, the prerogative of no single school. Moreover, the form of his poetry does not, at first sight, offer any noticeable break with the past. Yet by its lyrical qualities—its musicality and its intimate expression of deep, personal feelings—this verse must situate its creator in the vanguard of the French poets generally held to be Romantic.

The reputation of Lamartine has not remained constant. Toward the end of his life, poor and neglected, he wrote to make money and considered himself a galley slave of writing. One of the reasons for this neglect was the vogue, under Napoleon III, of the Parnassians, to the exclusion of others. In part, the Parnassians may be viewed as reacting against Lamartine, or at least against his example. Poetry, wrote Lamartine, is "the incarnation of that which is most intimate in man's heart, and most divine in his thought." This and many similar pronouncements must be held partly responsible for the chaos that marks the attempts at finding a Romantic doctrine in France. The best of Lamartine has been highly esteemed by many critics, granted grudging praise by others. Even that element often considered the greatest attribute of Lamartine's poetry, its insubstantial, ethereal quality, has been deplored by those who long for high relief, color, precision, solidity.

The most famous of the *Meditations* is

"The Lake." It was originally entitled "Ode to the Bourget Lake." This finest of love elegies seems to owe much, directly and indirectly, to Jean Jacques Rousseau. The theme of a return alone to a place filled with memories of love and happiness recalls *The New Héloïse* by the eighteenth century writer. The direct inspiration for the poem, as for many in the collection, is Mme. Charles, the "Elvire" of the *Poetic Meditations*. Lamartine had met her at Aix-les-Bains and immediately formed a very deep attachment for her. A proposed reunion between them did not take place because of her illness and death. "The Lake" was written before her death in December, 1817, when her illness prevented her from coming to meet the poet.

In this piece the writer has returned alone to the lake. He feels forlorn at the thought that his happiness, which had been of short duration, is already threatened. He cannot help expressing his anguish at the rapid flight of time:

Jealous time, can it be that these moments
of intoxication
When love pours happiness for us in
long draughts,
Fly far from us with the same speed
As days of misfortune?

He wishes his love to be preserved at least as a memory. Aware of the transitory nature of all of man's life, the poet implores the lake and its environs—those reflections of an unchanging, permanent nature—to be a temple to his love, a shrine which will forever contain the memory of it:

What! Gone for ever? What! Entirely
lost?
This time which gave them, which now
wipes them out,
Will never give them back?

O lake! Silent rocks! Caverns! Dark
forest!

You whom time spares or whom it can
make young again,

Keep, fair landscape, keep at least
The memory of that night!

The poem, rather than offering the thoughts and sentiments of one man, seems to express the eternal problems of all men, while appearing to make of them a unique experience. The themes, man's awareness of the fragile and ephemeral character of happiness and his seeking of some consolation in nature, are to be found throughout the collection.

"Alone" is, after "The Lake," one of the best known of the *Poetic Meditations*. It was written shortly after the death of Mme. Charles and bears the direct, profound trace of the poet's grief. His love for Elvire has been refined and purified by her death: it is now an ideal, spiritual love. His longing to be with her is associated with an aspiration to a higher reality, for he feels an exile on earth. Even nature cannot now console him:

What are they for me, these valleys,
these palaces, these cottages,
Vain objects which have lost the charm
they once had?
Rivers, rocks, forests, once-cherished
solitude,
One person is missing, and the world is
deserted!

The emotion expressed here is anything but new to French poetry. By this time the laments and exaltations of sensitive souls in some nature setting were less than unusual. The secret of the beauty of the poem cannot therefore be found in the nature of the emotion expressed. Similarly, it is at first too hard to perceive any originality in the vocabulary or versification. The latter is quite regular; its only remarkable feature seems the frequency of perfect rhyme. The vocabulary involves a fair number of very conventional, classical periphrases and standard "poetic" words checked out from the classical armory. If one seeks an explanation in the person of the narrator or his mistress, it cannot be found; no telling detail

reveals their appearance or character. Even the setting is so vaguely described as to be any one of countless sites having a lake, a river, mountains, and forests. If no color, sound, or person limits the poem to any one place, it is also impossible to say what time is being described, beyond an awareness that it is evening. In thus leaving his horizons wide open, Lamartine was running a considerable risk; by being so vague, he might very well have fallen into the danger of making his poem so imprecise as to be meaningless or unrecognizable. Instead, he has succeeded in revealing his setting as a state of mind of the person contemplating it. The reader fills in the scene for himself. By leaving it open, the poet is able to present memories of the past alongside a scene in the present, with a suggestion of a future life beyond this world. He is able to intermingle sadness with beauty and an aspiration to happiness. He suggests much more than he states or shows, and an impression of tenderness and sincerity arises from the work. The standard, regular form seems to underline this sincerity. Finally, by a remarkable deployment of alliterations and emotive words and phrases, Lamartine bestows upon this poem a free-flowing sound and movement strongly suggestive of the qualities of music. The techniques used in "Alone" are no different from those to be found throughout the *Poetic Meditations*.

In other fine pieces from the *Poetic Meditations*, Lamartine builds up an ambience rather than a view; "Immortality," "The Valley," and "Autumn" are only a few examples. In each, Lamartine proceeds by deft touches until the atmosphere has been diffused. The reader is then able to add to the scene by drawing upon his own background.

Like du Bellay, a spiritual if not a real predecessor of Lamartine, the author of the *Poetic Meditations* lived for a time in Italy, as a representative of his country. It was in Florence, from 1826 to 1828, that he worked on the *Poetic and Religious*

Harmonies, which were published in 1830. Composed of forty-eight pieces, this collection contains some of the best of Lamartine, but is not perhaps so uniformly successful as the *Poetic Meditations* of 1820. Running through the *Poetic and Religious Harmonies* is a definite, spontaneous, religious ardor. Most of the poems are hymns of praise to God. In some there can be no doubt about the Christian inspiration. One of the finest examples is "Hymn to Christ." Yet the reader comes away with the impression that Lamartine's inspiration is perhaps less Christian than deistic or even Platonic. Although, unlike du Bellay, Lamartine seems to have enjoyed to the full his stay in Italy, one of the finest pieces in the collection, "Milly or the Native Land," contains the poet's affirmation of his preference for his humble village in France over the splendors of Italy.

Jocelyn is a long epic poem recounting the sacrifices and tribulations of a priest. The latter is scarcely orthodox. He is a practitioner of social Christianity, preaching by example, with sympathy for the spirit of the gospel, but little for Church pomp or literal dogma. Though there are magnificent descriptions of nature and rural life, the poem has many weaknesses.

It seems a pity that many imitations of Lamartine's work by lesser poets have tended to detract from the original. Also, it is unfortunate that in defining poetry in a passive way, as something received, Lamartine seems to have helped the movement toward imprecision and verbiage that one finds in many writers of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is regrettable that in a large part of Lamartine's work, looseness and inaccuracy are common. However, if this poet is granted the right extended to most, that only his finest works be considered in an evaluation of lasting value, his place among the most outstanding poets of the nineteenth century is by no means that of a usurper.

Lamartine's poetry is both conventional and original. On the one hand a

just comparison may be made with writers of a previous age. On the other hand,

similarities between his poetry and that of Paul Verlaine are striking.

THE POETRY OF LANDOR

Author: Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864)

First published: *Poems*, 1795; *Gebir*, 1798; *The Hellenics*, 1847; *Poemata et Inscriptiones*, 1847; *Italics*, 1848; *Last Fruit off an Old Tree*, 1853; *Antony and Octavius*, 1856; *Dry Sticks Fagoted by W. S. Landor*, 1858; *Heroic Idylls*, 1863

Walter Savage Landor, who has been described as a classic writer in a romantic age, was an isolated figure who outlived by many years the period of the Romantic triumph in England. Possessing from his earliest youth a strong attachment to both the ideals and the styles of Greek and Latin literature, he nevertheless admired and sympathized with the artistry of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. On the whole, however, the more restrained manner of his own poetry tended toward the temper best exemplified by Browning and Tennyson. Often he composed first in Latin and then translated his work into English, consciously preserving the classical qualities of the original.

Having studied at Rugby, Landor matriculated at Oxford in 1795, when the tide of republicanism and revolutionism was running high. His active sympathy with the ascendant ideals of liberty brought him into difficulties with the university officials and eventually led to his withdrawing from Oxford without a degree. But the excellent training in Latin which he received there was to leave a distinctive mark on all his writings. Unmistakably and pervasively it is evident in the noble restraint and chastened expression which give Landor's poems a typically classical touch.

At the same time, with the Romantics, he was a worshiper of nature and an unflinching defender of the downtrodden and helpless. In actuality, there is in the man, as in his poetry and prose, not a diametric clash of classical and Romantic contraries but, rather, a mingling of these opposing tendencies. Landor declared sincerely that he was not seeking wide

popularity as a poet. To explain this attitude he used the effective metaphor, "I shall dine late, but the dining room will be well-lighted, the guests few and select." Although their mutual influence seems not to have been great, he appreciated, and was appreciated by, such notable contemporaries as Carlyle, Dickens, Browning, and Wordsworth.

In his first volume of poetry, *Poems*, which appeared in 1795, Landor displayed considerable dignity of phrase and artistry of style. Yet this volume appears inconsequential when compared to *Gebir*, an Oriental tale in blank verse written during two solitary years in Wales and published in 1798. In its seven books this epic recounts the adventures of the mythic founder of Gibraltar. The elevated style and cadence of the poem suggest that Landor's models were Milton and classical authors such as Pindar. *Gebir* drew attention and admiration from a number of Landor's discriminating contemporaries, but was too weak in characterization and narrative content to appeal to the general reader. The one passage of the poem which has achieved lasting recognition is the episode of "Tamar's Wrestling," in which the outclassed shepherd loses to the "nymph divine" both the wrestling match and the sheep he has wagered.

"Shepherd," said she, "and will you
wrestle now.
And with the sailor's hardier race en-
gage?"

"Whether a shepherd, as indeed you
seem,

Or whether of the hardier race you
boast,
I am not daunted, no: I will engage."

Now she came forward, eager to en-
gage;
But, first her dress, her bosom then,
survey'd,
And heav'd it, doubting if she could
deceive.

Her bosom seem'd, inclos'd in haze like
heav'n,
To baffle touch; and rose forth unde-
fined.

Above her knees she drew the robe suc-
cinct,
Above her breast, and just below her
arms:

"This will preserve my breath, when
tightly bound,
If struggle and equal strength should
so constrain."

Thus, pulling hard to fasten it, she
spoke,

And rushing at me, closed. I thrill'd
throughout

And seem'd to lessen and shrink up
with cold.

Again, with violent impulse gushed my
blood;

And hearing nought external, thus ab-
sorb'd,

I heard it rushing through each turbid
vein,

Shake my unsteady swimming sight in
air.

Yet with unyielding though uncertain
arms,

I clung around her neck; the vest be-
neath

Rustled against our slippery limbs en-
twined:

Often mine, springing with eluded
force,

Started aside, and trembled, till re-
placed.

And when I most succeeded, as I
thought,

My bosom and my throat felt so com-
prest

That life was almost quivering on my
lips,

Yet nothing was there painfull! these
are signs

Of secret arts, and not human might,
What arts I cannot tell: I only know

My eyes grew dizzy, and my strength
decay'd,

I was indeed o'ercome!—with what re-
gret,

And more, with what confusion, when
I reached

The fold, and yielding up the sheep,
she cried,

"This pays a shepherd to a conquering
maid."

She smil'd, and more of pleasure than
disdain

Was in her dimpled chin, and liberal
lip,

And eyes that languished, lengthening,
—just like love.

She went away. . . .

The uneven quality of *Gebir* has been
best described by Coleridge, who referred
to its beautiful passages as "eminences
excessively bright and all the ground
around and between them in darkness."
Indeed, Lander's longer poems, gener-
ally, are best remembered in extract. "I
must read again Lander's *Julian*," Charles
Lamb wrote in 1815, "I have not read it
for some time. I think he must have
failed in *Roderick*, for I remember noth-
ing of him, nor of any distinct character
as a character—only fine-sounding pas-
sages."

Lander devoted the first twenty-six
years of his literary career almost wholly
to verse. He then turned for a time pri-
marily to the writing of prose, of which
his *Imaginary Conversations* and the cre-
ative romance *Pericles and Aspasia* are
the most noteworthy. Then followed the
period of Lander's Latin poetry, during
which he produced Latin verse of all
kinds—elegiac, idyllic, lyric, and satiric
—directly as well as indirectly imitating
various Roman writers, among them
Catullus, Horace, Juvenal, and Vergil. In
1847 he published these poems under the
title of *Poemata et Inscriptiones*; and that
year he also published in English *The
Hellenics*, a series of poems on Greek
topics, many of which had been written
long before. A second version appeared
twelve years later.

The Hellenics contains imaginary dia-

logues of moderate length in poetic form. A number of them having been written, like parts of *Gebir*, first in Latin, these poems are very much like their classical models. The settings and situations generally are dramatic; the characters are harmoniously arranged to set off their distinctive qualities, and the entire design is carefully proportioned. Although the products of this craftsmanship frequently resemble sedate, cool sculpture rather than intense drama, they are not devoid of an inner life of human emotion. Two poems in the collection which especially demonstrate the latter quality are the tragic "Iphigeneia" and the idyllic "Hamadryad."

In the former poem, Iphigeneia, daughter of Agamemnon, is to be sacrificed to the gods so that her father's ships will have a safe and prosperous journey.

Iphigeneia, when she heard her doom
At Aulis, and when all beside the king
Had gone away, took his right-hand,
and said,

"O father! I am young and very happy.
I do not think the pious Calchas heard
Distinctly what the Goddess spake. Old
age

Obscures the senses. . . ."

The father placed his cheek upon her
head,
And tears dropt down it, but the king
of men

Replied not. . . .

"But father! to see you no more, and
see

Your love, O father! go ere I am gone!"
Gently he moved her off, and drew her
back,

Bending his lofty head far over her's,
And the dark depths of nature heaved
and burst.

He turn'd away; not far, but silent
still. . . .

An aged man now enter'd, and without
One word, stept slowly on, and took
the wrist

Of the pale maiden. She lookt up, and
saw

The fillet of the priest and calm cold
eyes.

Then turn'd she where her parent
stood, and cried

"O father! grieve no more: the ships
can sail."

Aside from *Gebir*, *The Hellenics*, and several "closet" dramas, the most nearly successful of which is *Count Julian*, almost all of Landor's poetry was in the form of occasional lyrics. Easily and regularly over a period of more than fifty years, he produced short poems, among which are his best poetic creations. There are several hundred of these occasional verses, forming a record of cheerfulness, gallantry, and affection, as well as of sad retrospect. Some of them, notably "Rose Aylmer," have achieved lasting success. Perhaps the best and most genuinely felt words in all of Landor's poetry are these eight lines of *Rose Aylmer*:

Ah what avails the sceptred race,

Ah what the form divine!

What every virtue, every grace!

Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes

May weep, but never see,

A night of memories and of sighs

I consecrate to thee.

Other lyrics possess qualities which range from engaging charm to playful triviality and roguish trifling. The verses Landor wrote in old age are majestic in their own way. Of these, "I Strove with None" is the most famous, and it is typical in the author's proclaiming his apartness of temper. His announcement, "I hate the crowd," is like Ben Jonson's pose which could not entirely hide the genuine feeling underneath. Seldom successful in spontaneous poetry, and sometimes far wide of the mark, Landor yet displays sensitiveness, mastery of the exquisitely beautiful phrase, exceptional proliferation of imagery, and graceful, though fastidious, dignity.

Landor declared: "Poetry was always my amusement, prose my study and business." Although his literary reputation is based mostly on his prose, it is in poetry that he has achieved his few works of

genuine greatness. During the last decades of his life, although his disposition grew increasingly aloof, he continued to produce poetry of high quality. The volume titled *Last Fruit off an Old Tree* is notable mainly for a group of five dramatic scenes on the trial and death of Beatrice Cenci, the heroine of Shelley's poetic drama *The Cenci*. *Antony and Octavius*, a group of twelve dramatic dialogues, appeared in 1856. In 1858 he published a miscellany of poetry entitled *Dry Sticks Fagoted by W. S. Landor*. His final volume was the *Heroic Idylls*.

Landor's own proud, resonant voice was heard over an amazing span of years;

and although we readily acknowledge the truth of Swinburne's epitaph,

And through the trumpet of a child of
Rome
Rang the pure music of the flutes of
Greece,

we must immediately qualify it by the recollection that throughout Landor's creative life, his classically based verse idylls such as the beautiful "Hamadryad" and its sequel "Acon and Rhodope" are in essence not only Landorian but also "Romantic" and modern. Landor's works are products of the age of Keats and the age of Tennyson.

THE POETRY OF LARKIN

Author: Philip Larkin (1922-)

First published: *The North Ship*, 1945; *Poems*, 1954; *The Less Deceived*, 1955; *The Whitsun Weddings*, 1964

Where does the mainstream of English poetry lie? Admirers of the contemporary British poet, Philip Larkin, see its source to be Wordsworth, its exponents Thomas Hardy and Edward Thomas, those quiet introverted men who refused to follow any but their own individual bent. It is a stream that moves underground when intensely classical or romantic spirits are abroad—an Eliot or a Dylan Thomas—but which is encouraged into the light by the ironic, contemplative aura of the later Auden. It was in the early 1950's that "The Movement" declared itself again, in Robert Conquest's anthology, *New Lines*; and the British public revealed itself as ready for Wordsworth's "real language of men." Novelists and poets began to take a hard look at changing social patterns: at middle class mentality, suburban mediocrity, the uncaring anonymity of "I'm all right, Jack." It was a world shorn of metaphor and myth whose poets almost desperately declared themselves as humanists, dedicated to the revelation of "the real person or event." Honesty or the awareness of honesty was their religion.

Philip Larkin was one of the first, along with Kingsley Amis and John Wain, to reflect the new attitudes. He had started off at the beginning of the war as a promising young novelist. His first novel, *Jill*, was published in 1940, when he was twenty-one. It depicts the struggles of a scholarship boy thrust into the upper class world of Oxford and resolving his problems through fantasy. However, Larkin's 1955 book of poems, *The Less Deceived*, indicated that he had stripped himself of the dream and was forcing himself to become at home in a world essentially alien to the dreamer. He was seeking a way to deal with things as they are, not as they seem; without distortion. Possibly for this reason the first poem in the book, and one that has been much anthologized, is most revealing of his approach and method. It is titled "Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album."

With its evocation of a real girl in a real place this poem sets the colloquial, self-mocking tone reminiscent of Hardy's ballads or of Meredith's lyrics. The structure, too, of this poem is as complicated

and controlled as Hardy's: a loose iambic stanza of five lines with a consistent rhyme scheme, yet contemporary in its use of half-rhymes and assonances.

In his poem, Larkin is not satisfied merely to record, to photograph, even though he can flick out the exact word to create a picture. He can do more by commenting on the scene and involving the listener in his commentary. A purely "imagist" poet would be content to leave the picture objectively before us, implying only its emotional direction. But Larkin plunges right into exposition, and he goes over the scene again, peeling away leaf after leaf to reveal the frustration.

"Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album" reveals his control over his vehicle which is a characteristic of all of Larkin's work. He is an intent craftsman, creating within a set form an amazing variety of rhythmic variations. And he is steadily concerned with the evocative power of assonance and alliteration. This poem is aptly illustrative of Larkin's nostalgic, ironic mood; of his reasonable acceptance of an unsatisfactory world; and of his *angst* which never becomes self-pity. There is, in his best work, a stoicism which keeps the artist apart from the crowd yet not superior to it, as in "Reasons for Attendance" when he looks through a ballroom window at the jiving dancers.

Integrity and honesty are the keynotes in Philip Larkin's volume of poems titled *The Whitsun Weddings*. Here he is willing himself to identify more closely with

other men, other houses, other streets and communities. Many of the poems are less introverted, consisting of more objective recording and less private comment. The result is lively, as a newspaper is lively; but one wonders whether the poems in this volume may not be more ephemeral, concrete though they appear. The colloquial tone makes them highly topical, but the sense of timelessness so strong in *The Less Deceived* is somehow missing. Throughout all these later poems it is remarkable to note how often the last line, which in *The Less Deceived* was often a *tour de force* of strength and confidence, has become wearily negative.

The title poem, "The Whitsun Weddings," is the longest and most ambitious. In all eight stanzas the iambic pentameter is skillfully handled; the structure, even the rhymes, seem as natural as everyday speech. Inevitably the tone brings to mind a trenchant, detached observer of the noisy wedding parties: the loud-voiced mothers, an uncle mouthing smut, genteel dress, cheap jewelry. The poem expresses a desperate sense of time spent uselessly. At the end it is no longer merely ironic; it has become a bitter commentary on the meaningless in life. "No exit" faces the poet. Is it that Philip Larkin, who began by assuming a steady unflinching view of the human condition, is now disturbed or terrified by the spectacle of humanity's nakedness? The world that had seemed so interestingly photographic now forces him to examine its flesh and blood.

THE POETRY OF LAWRENCE

Author: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

First published: *Love Poems and Others*, 1913; *Amores*, 1916; *Look! We Have Come Through*, 1917; *New Poems*, 1918; *Bay* 1919; *Tortoises*, 1921; *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*, 1923; *Pansies*, 1929; *Nettles*, 1930; *Last Poems*, 1932; *Fire and Other Poems*, 1940; *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, 1964

In a note to his *Collected Poems* of 1928, D. H. Lawrence explains that he tried to arrange the poems in chronologi-

cal order "because their personal nature made them, in effect, a biography of inner life and experience. Lawrence's po-

etry, which is not widely read, succeeds for just this reason; reading through the volumes, one must agree with the poet, for the poems, rough as they often seem, sometimes even crude and apparently rapidly composed, are everywhere alive; they pulse with the currents and cross currents of their author's tempestuous life and affairs. This effect is remarkable in any body of poems, and Lawrence's are also remarkable for their haunting, incantatory cadences. In other words, the poems are seldom witty or intellectually complex; they do not sustain, nor often require, a great deal of explication or analysis. Perhaps better, they require, even demand, that the reader open himself to them, to the gusts of emotions—anger, bitterness, tenderness, outrage, nostalgia, regret, love—which make up their form and content, and which are artistically controlled and expressed chiefly in haunting though generally a-metrical rhythms.

The poems, up to 1923, revolve around Lawrence's early loves, and his mother, especially. The background of these poems, which are all rhymed, may be supplied easily by anyone familiar with his autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers*. Then there is the death of his mother, which completes the volume of rhymed poems and forms, as Lawrence says, the "climax" of the first volume of the collected poems. Chronologically overlapping these poems, which run through the war into 1918, are the unrhymed poems of *Look! We Have Come Through*, the poems which deal mainly with the love and torments of his marriage to Frieda, who left a husband and two children to marry Lawrence, and their life in Austria and in England during the war. The poems in "Birds, Beasts and Flowers" are mainly of the Mexican and New Mexico sojourn of 1920-1923, and conclude the first volume. Beyond these, Lawrence's poems, most notably in *Pansies* and *Nettles*, become stridently political and anti-social. Roughhewn and full of disdain, anger, and even hate,

often near hysteria, full of preachings and pronouncements, these poems are mostly ephemera. Then, with last poems like "The Ship of Death," he reaches the apex of his poetic career. Haunting, mysterious, religious, the poem is a unique contribution to modern verse.

It is nearly impossible to illustrate the nature of Lawrence's poetry with short quotations, for the poems build slowly from a perception, an image, to a flash of realized emotion. They are deceptively simple, for the curve of feeling is often very complex. They are organic growths, and the art with which Lawrence can build a poem to a climax is disarming. Details are introduced; they slowly become focused and symbolic as a *persona*, a viewpoint, is established, a conflict—emotional, sexual—is gradually engaged and developed through incremental repetition. Then the full experience blossoms forth, usually directly stated, and the poem, a little drama built out of the countercurrents of image and response, is completed. To quote a line or stanza hardly reveals the process, for it is a process, a chaffing, rhythmic movement building a tension and bringing a release, that is Lawrence's method. There is, therefore, more intensity and significance in the cadences and reiterations of detail than in single images or memorable lines. The poems grow, develop; they are not set pieces at all. Of course, all poems work in some such way, but Lawrence's more purely so, and with the attendant risk of flatness, prosaic-ness, and loss of form.

At his best, however, the accumulating reiteration of line, image, and thought has the effect of a chant or incantation. The poem becomes, as in "The Ship of Death" or in "Bavarian Gentians," a kind of ritual; or, in a poem like "Snake," it is as if the poet's nerves were laid bare, quivering. In one of his early poems, "The Scent of Irises," Lawrence displays the facility with which he can develop a response, in this case to a jar of iris in the classroom where he was teaching. The

iris and his lonely slavery as a school-teacher take him back to an earlier time, in the country, with a girl. The internal rhyme and alliteration, the way the lines are "rove-over," the strongly cadenced anapestic-like rhythm with the beautifully manipulated double stresses, the repetition of syntactic phrases and clauses, may, in their chanting effect and syncopation, remind one of Hopkins or Whitman or Dylan Thomas, and right-fully so. The developing tensions between the girl and the flowers, between sexual blossoming and the reminder, in the last line, of death, illustrates, in part, the manner in which Lawrence characteristically works. There is strife here, between the "you" of the girl and the "me" of the poet; the tone is half-nostalgic, half-bitter. The love and the simultaneous hate vie for precedence with desire and scorn: cross currents of emotion. The "Scent of Irises" is a very typical and compelling poem, as are the better-known "Love on the Farm," "Lightening," and "Monologue of a Mother," all from the early poems.

"Piano," from the last volume of the rhymed poems, *Bay*, is one of Lawrence's best-known poems but is often dismissed with the charge of sentimentality. The poem relates how the poet, listening to a woman sing, is reminded of his mother singing to him as a child, and how that remembrance sweeps his manhood away. The poem is *about* the dominion of mother over even the adult man, and one may say that the poem is *about* a particularly pernicious sentimentality, but the poem is not sentimental, for Lawrence has objectified and dramatized the experience. His tormenting love for Frieda is well expressed in "A Young Wife," from *Look! We Have Come Through*. The experiences reflected in this volume begin in 1912 and extend to the winter of 1916. In the poem the ambivalent feelings, the tension between love and fear, is expressed in images of darkness and night. The darkness becomes a favorite image for Lawrence, as it appears to sym-

bolize or suggest both death and the profound, mysterious, and instinctual inner life. Lawrence, who grew up in the raped countryside of the Midlands, whose father was a victim of the mines, became in "philosophy" a primitivist who felt that modern society had buried man's instinctual, most human self. He advocated a retreat from rationality and a rediscovering of the primitive "blood-consciousness" of emotional and instinctive being. His novel *The Plumed Serpent* depicts a revolution in Mexico, behind which lies the revival of the ancient Indian god Quetzalcoatl, whose "return" is accompanied by rituals which include the shedding of blood. The forms of modern culture were to be swept away; and the original man, including his cruelty, was to be resurrected. In another poem, "Snake," Lawrence vividly describes his horror at seeing a snake emerge from a hole in the ground and drink at the water fountain. He throws a stick at it, signifying modern man's fear of the primitive, the secret, and, by extension, the sexual. Then the poet is disgusted with himself for such a reaction of fear and cowardliness. The snake is described in terms which relate him to the ancient, primitive past, to the mythic. In Lawrence's view it is that modern "voice" of education which must be overcome, so that men can live as men again, and not as machines or as slaves to machines and the bloodless, passionless machine-owners, such as Lady Chatterley's symbolically crippled husband.

Lawrence's movement, in his verse, toward themes dealing with ancient myth and ritual is evidenced by this first stanza from "Middle of the World," one of his last poems, in which he asserts that the sea will never grow old, lose its blueness, or fail to raise its watery hills in the dawn-light as the ship of Dionysos, grape vines decorating its masts and attended by leaping dolphins, sails the waves.

Here is cadenced verse, working very close to prose, but highly poetic in its control, in its patterning of syntax, and

the movement of symbolic images. Dionysos is, of course, a symbol and the repository of the life of passion, of instinct, and of freedom from the bindings of rationality. The sea is a symbol of fruition and life.

Lawrence searched the globe for a place where he could feel the ancient pulse of life still beating, but perhaps nowhere did he feel it more than in the burial caves of the ancient Etruscans; the vaults are vividly decorated with images of hunting and of other activities. From the Etruscan caves Lawrence drew the main images and primitive conception of death which informs "The Ship of Death." Perhaps his greatest poem, it was rewritten many times, but the reader will find it fully rewarding simply to read as one poem the many versions. It is a ritual chant in praise of death and man's jour-

ney toward obliviousness. In this poem Lawrence refers to the Etruscan belief in a kind of rebirth, when souls will need their tools and crockery, and the ship, which sails to oblivion, sails on through to a new life, where peace is renewed within the heart.

No quotation can communicate the poem. Alternately elegiac and joyful, the cadences subtly modulated to fit the moods, Lawrence here plumbs, as it were, his vision of death and touches on the rock of belief he found in ancient ritual and culture.

"Bavarian Genetians" also depicts an imaginative journey to the underworld, where in the mysterious life in darkness Lawrence chants, in images of Pluto's hell and of Persephone, his mythic sense of death and rebirth in the darkness of lost and legendary time.

THE POETRY OF LEOPARDI

Author: Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837)

Principal published works: *Versi*, 1826; *Operetti morali*, 1827; *Canzi*, 1831

Giacomo Leopardi, Italy's most distinguished contribution to European Romanticism, was one of the great lyricists of the nineteenth century. Virtually a contemporary of Keats, he demonstrates many similarities to that brilliant, short-lived Englishman. More useful, however, is the comparison with Wordsworth. Like him, Leopardi uses rural scenes and idioms and writes much verse superficially in the same mode. A typical poem of both will begin with a scene rich in natural, simple details, from which the poet weaves both message and mood out of his impression of nature. Nothing could be farther from the divine power in nature that Wordsworth depicts, however, than the bleakly pessimistic mood which is the characteristic impression of a Leopardi lyric. Undoubtedly as a result of his tortured and pathetic childhood, joined to his darker cast of mind, Leopardi's work is almost anti-Wordsworthian in tone and depicts a welcome although a

morbid contrast to other nineteenth century Romanticists who conventionally, almost mechanically, found in birds and flowers solace from social disappointments. The season of rebirth in Leopardi's "To Spring" is a thing of irony more than of joy, for the seasons to him merely remind one of the irrevocable coming of eternal winter. Though "fragrant spring breathes upon the frozen heart" now, soon the ice of death and disintegration will descend upon man, creating a stillness that no spring will ever touch. This same lyric contrasts the lost world of classical Greece, in which the world seemed to live in dynamic rapport with the divine in myth and legend, with the world of today, where "blind thunder" wanders over the valley and the rain falls on good and evil alike. The poet concludes by asking the spirit of nature to affirm that there is a divinity even though the deity be but a "pitiless" spectator of meaningless comings and goings.

Undoubtedly Leopardi's remarkable but pathetic upbringing had much to do with the bitterness and sadness of his verse. The lonely, brilliant child of ambitious but stodgy parents, his intellect was recognized at an early age, but was then pressured by his family at a terrible rate. At fifteen he could both read and write Greek, but at eighteen he was broken in body and spirit, with eyes permanently damaged, spine prematurely crooked by extraordinary intellectual endeavor, and mind keenly suffering as well. Renouncing classical scholarship through necessity as well as conviction, Leopardi turned to creative literature almost as therapy. As D. H. Lawrence would affirm later about himself, he seemed to shed his illnesses of body and spirit in books.

Too much Leopardi at one sitting is as overwhelming to the reader as Leopardi's life must have been to the poet, but taken in selections his creations have a spirit that helps fill out the literature of European Romanticism with a sad beauty too rarely found in others of the period. In "Memories" the poet sits before the open window and looks at the stars, but such an experience intensifies bitterness more than it dissipates it. Memories flood of his lost boyhood when he had his health and hope, when the stars beckoned instead of glittering coldly and mindlessly. "My heart never told me," he thinks, how "my green age" would be wasted here in "the barbarous town, with a cheap boorish people." The bell that once gave meaning to the day now mocks it; now only death awaits to alleviate the barren dullness of days without hope or love. Then the poet speaks of the loss in death of Nerina, who is another image of the bright past now gone. Here, and again in "To Sylvia," Leopardi creates something akin to Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems, but with the ubiquitous Leopardi difference. For Wordsworth, the death of Lucy is somehow made acceptable through the natural world that took her back but is given life through her death. No such reconciliation is possible for Leopardi,

who finds nothing beyond the bare bones of death. The death of Sylvia, like the passage of spring and youth, is another reminder of the deception nature practices on men:

Sylvia, do you still recall
That time of your life here
When beauty shone within
Your laughing, glancing eyes,
And you, thoughtful and merry,
passed across
The threshold of your youth?

Love is another unfulfilled promise, a dream to die, and Sylvia's hand bares the only truth, "a bare sepulchre." These poems represent the Romantic lyric tradition in their use of sexual motifs, but they also undoubtedly reflect the frustration of Leopardi's few but intense and all unrequited love affairs, about which his close friend and biographer, Antonio Ranieri, tells. Physically blighted, keenly sensitive and shy, Leopardi found sexuality only another realm in which man could suffer the cruelties of indifferent fate and ineluctable mortality.

But from the bitter fruit came a wine of lyricism that has its own truth as well as its own beauty. In a prose dialogue between Tasso and his familiar spirit, Leopardi's version of Tasso says that man generally oscillates in a tedium between pleasure and pain, but pleasure is wholly a delusion about which he dreams but never achieves. So he lives largely in tedium, which is the true passion that fills his existence. Later this quality will be Baudelaire's *ennui* and to the modern, spiritual alienation, in which intelligent man suffers from the knowledge of that unbridgeable gap between hope and reality, and from the inevitable *angst* that such knowledge brings. What remedy can there be for tedium? So Tasso asks his dream visitor. "Sleep, opium and pain," the spirit replies. And pain is the only relief, for through suffering man fully knows perhaps all the truth of life he is capable of possessing. This insight is a key to Leopardi's aesthetic, as well as be-

ing a virtual axiom for the existentialist writers of today, with whom Leopardi has strong though archaic affinity.

The famous lyric "The Broom, or the Flower of the Desert," written in Ranieri's house on the slope of Vesuvius a few months before Leopardi's death at thirty-nine, is one of his finest achievements in his paradoxical poetry of bitter lyricism. In this flower, which blooms brilliantly but briefly on the side of the volcano that destroyed it before and will destroy it again, Leopardi found the perfect image for men's brief but brilliant hopes that are closed at either end by darkness. In nineteenth century fashion, Leopardi uses this image to begin and end a long poem that comments upon both nature and society.

Here on the naked back
Of the dread mountain,
Vesuvius the destroyer,
Which no other tree nor flower
cheer,
You scatter round your solitary
clumps,
O scented broom,
Contented with a desert. I saw you
too
Add beauty with your stems to those
lone tracts
Encompassing that city
Which was mistress once of all man-
kind,
And with their grave and silent air
they seem
To act as witness and reminder of
The empire that is gone.

The flower is expanded into a symbol of Pompeii. Then Leopardi, as bleak in vision as Hardy, notes how "loving Nature" cares here for her own and calls us to witness here "the magnificent progressive destiny of Humankind" as well. (Such sentiments as these account for Leopardi's appeal to James Thomson, who translated Leopardi into English and echoed him in the bitter philosophy con-

tained in his "city of Dreadful Night," that overlong and turgid but occasionally powerful poem of the modern city of unalive men, surrounded by the wasteland that is our spiritual landscape.) Nature has no more care for man than for the ants, and she pours her lava, her dissolution, upon man and all his projects. In a similar mood Leopardi then discourses upon nineteenth century liberalism, prophesying, as Joseph Conrad did later, that the very men crying now for liberty will enslave others who oppose their version of it. Yet the pathetic but perennial broom blooms anyway, like man who, born to perish and reared in pain, ludicrously persists in saying, "I was born for joy."

Leopardi's most characteristic verse form is the *canzone libera*, a stanza largely of blank verse, but punctuated at select moments of intensity with short, rhymed intervals. Though he has a mastery of traditional imagery and diction, he strives for idiomatic simplicity. (His knowledge of classical literature gave him a command of ancient culture more profound than that of almost any other nineteenth century poet. At eighteen he wrote an imitation Greek ode to Neptune that was accepted as genuine by many scholars of his day.) His use of villagers, peasant settings, and rural scenes fulfill the aim he set forth in his famed essay on Mme. de Stael's Germanic Romanticism, when he called upon Italy's young poets to cultivate their own customs, their own scenes, their own folklore and leave those of the Germans to the North. This essay became a manifesto of nationalistic Italian literature, thus giving him a revered place in his country's nineteenth century radical spirit, like Byron's in England and Hugo's in France, despite the quite bleak character of Leopardi's beautiful but dark lyrics.

THE POETRY OF MACHADO

Author: Antonio Machado (1875-1939)

Principal published works: *Soledades, Galerías y otros poemas*, 1907; *Campos de Castilla*, 1912; *Nuevas Canciones*, 1920; *Cancionero Apócrifo*, 1926

The spiritual crisis brought about in Spain by the loss of its last overseas possessions in Spanish America in 1898 found expression through the works of the Spanish writers of the *Generación del 98* (Generation of '98). The resulting attitude of pessimism, analysis of the past, desire for change, and consciousness of history is reflected in productions of Spanish men of letters of that time.

Spain had actually been suffering a prolonged frustration in its national goals. Most of the Spanish-American colonies, discovered, explored, conquered, acculturated, and exploited by the mother country, had obtained their independence during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. A relatively small portion of the old Hispanic empire remained. But when Cuba and Puerto Rico gained their freedom, Spain lost all its political links with the American continent. Four centuries of Spanish rule and influence in the Americas had ended.

A strong reaction appeared among the Spanish intelligentsia. Spain was forced to set new goals, close its eyes to tradition, and re-examine its political life. Philosophers, fiction writers, and essayists put together their efforts to arouse the soul of their country and make it open its eyes to reality and the future.

It could be thought that this generation had no place for poets, men of abstractions and often unconcerned with national affairs. However, writers not only of commitment but also of contemplation appeared. Antonio Machado, the best poet of the *Generación*, fully shared the intellectual and emotional attitude of his age. The development of his themes and his poetic perspective began in those critical years.

From his first poems Machado demonstrated the coordinates of his poetry. He

will be in all his books the poet of time, of melancholy memories, of death, of concern for his country, a writer in vain pursuit of the divinity, singer of love in terms of metaphysical speculation.

Perhaps no other Spanish-speaking poet has written so much about the phenomenon of time. For him, poetry is the result of inner, personal experience, in contact with his world, expressed not only by way of ideas, but mainly by way of intuition, with the intention of giving to such experiences a universal value.

Few writers have felt the burden of time as Machado did. A philosopher and poet, he went deep into the analysis of its essence both as a metaphysical entity and as a reality affecting human life. He did not theorize about it; through poetry he tried to grasp its meaning and to present its pathetic impact upon man.

Among his preferred ways of meeting time and interpreting his own life, Machado finds in daydreams a fit instrument. In this respect he falls in line with Calderón de la Barca, poet and playwright of the Golden Age of Spain, who proclaimed in one of his dramas that "life is a dream." For Machado, poetry is also a daydream; life is a permanent attitude of watchful vision with open eyes. We can frequently discover in his poetry an ecstatic mood. Rather than recalling his memories, he used to dream of them. For him the true interior life was that of dreams and, conversely, these are the best way of knowing his inward being.

These dreams are not the substance of the subconsciousness nor are they expressed in a super-realistic manner. They are simply the manifestation of yesterday that presses upon the poet, causing him to live his life again in recollection. In this way they are made present and converted into poetic forms.

Time is the span between birth and death in man. For Machado, who was reared in an educational environment devoid of religious training, death is only a limit, a state of absolute finiteness, rather than the last act of human life or the beginning of a different one. Since nobody can boast of having experienced death, its apprehension is only an aprioristic idea, the object of belief, not of knowledge. At the same time, death is always possible. Because of this continuous imminence, Machado experiences the anguish of death but meets it with a stoic resignation. In his poetry there is neither the cry of rebelliousness nor belief in the immortality of the soul. Sometimes death appears as something connatural with the poet—a companion.

The presence of death is sometimes so sharp that Machado suddenly thinks that his end is imminent, but he is appeased by the hope of living more days until he may see the bright morning of death.

"Spain aches me," was the poignant cry of Miguel de Unamuno, one of the writers of the *Generación del 98*. It was an attitude shared by all his contemporaries. That generation of Spaniards, receptive and national-minded, took as their own the collective problems of their country. These problems were the consequence of many years without collective values and endeavors. Machado devoted his pen to a poetic dissection of his country. *Campos de Castilla* (*Lands of Castile*), published in 1912, is his contribution to the most pungent question of his generation: the past and future of Spain.

A two-fold Spain appears in this book: the "official" and the "authentic" Spain. For Machado, they have been living divorced for many years. The "official" has created a Spain of tradition, laziness, individualism, and presumptions. The "authentic" is the Spain of the people, who dream and fight and think and live after their own ideals of honesty, hard work, and patriotism.

Castile is, for the writers of the *Generación*, the heart and symbol of Spain, be-

cause it has played a special role in Spanish life for many years. Machado chooses this region and tries to find in it both the constructive and destructive forces that have molded the Spanish soul. The landscape of his vision is chiefly in Soria, where he spent some decisive years of his life and where he met his wife, dead a few years later. He remembers his childhood in Seville, merry and colorful, in contrast to a less happy youth in the Castilian plateau.

Campos de Castilla abounds in strong, pessimistic poems, written mainly in the most traditional meters of Spanish poetry: the Alexandrian and the octosyllabic. Machado speaks of poor people, ancient warriors, barren fields, familiar tragedies, and the painful remembrance of his dead wife.

In "The Land of Alvargonzález," the longest poem in the book, Machado depicts the tragedy of a rural family. The poet, in bitter, popular, and lyric *romanzas*, tells a story of envy and murder. The father is killed by his older sons; his farm, which they inherit, becomes arid; and when Miguel, the last born of the brothers, returns rich from the New World, he buys the land from his brothers. The land now flourishes, and his brothers, repentant of their sin, plunge into the Black Lagoon.

The Castilian landscape is frequently associated with his wife, Leonor, dead at the age of seventeen in Soria. This only true love was born, met the poet, married him, and died in the Castilian land. Machado imagines going with her, enjoying the scenery, though the consciousness of her death makes him melancholy.

Machado never gave profound expression of religious origin. His education, based on the principles of secularization of thought and the philosophy of positivism, was not concerned with the relationship between divinity and man. There is an agnostic attitude in most of his books. His interpellations to God are vague and made among dreams.

We find in Machado's poetry some

preference toward the metaphysical treatment of love. For him, love is like the explosion of spring, an attitude of being escorted by an impersonal and merely suggested feminine companion. A second step in love comes later when man encounters a real woman, but then, paradoxically, anguish and waste of life plague the lover because in spite of his efforts he cannot yield himself totally to the loved one. When she disappears from the immediate circle of the lover, oblivion comes. Finally, she becomes only a subject of reminiscence and poetry.

Time, the past, dreams, death, God, and love are the eternal questions of man. Poets and philosophers have tried to find some answer to them. Antonio Machado, poet and philosopher, made an attempt to find an explanation of himself and his world in a given time and space. He did not succeed, and he did not expect to, but he left the deep, beautiful, tentative testimony of a man who thinks that he is only a traveler in this world, condemned to the yoke of time and to the sole glimpse of life's mysteries.

THE POETRY OF MacLEISH

Author: Archibald MacLeish (1892-)

Principal published works: *Tower of Ivory*, 1917; *The Happy Marriage*, 1924; *The Pot of Earth*, 1925; *Streets in the Moon*, 1926; *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, 1928; *New Found Land*, 1930; *Conquistador*, 1932; *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City*, 1933; *Public Speech*, 1936; *Land of the Free*, 1938; *America Was Promises*, 1939; *Active and Other Poems*, 1948; *Collected Poems, 1917-1952*, 1952; *Songs for Eve*, 1954

There is a wide range of achievement in the poetry of Archibald MacLeish, but there is nearly always high technical excellence and the student of technique will be greatly rewarded by discovering in MacLeish's work the subtlety of the rhyme and assonance, the complexity of the metrics, and the variety of his forms. Although many of MacLeish's shorter poems make pleasant reading, the longer poems are perhaps more interesting in that they reveal more fully the fabric of his thought. Among the shorter poems, one might consider "The Happy Marriage," "The Silent Slain," "The End of the World," "Selene Afterwards," "No Lamp Has Ever Shown Us Where To Look," "Hearts' and Flowers," "Ars Poetica," "You, Andrew Marvell," "Land's End," "American Letter," "Empire Builders," "Invocation to the Social Muse," "Words in Time," "Thunderhead," "The Snowflake Which Is Now and Hence Forever," "Ship of Fools," and "Reasons for Music." One would do well to consider among the longer poems: "The Pot of Earth," "The Hamlet of A.

MacLeish," "Einstein," "Conquistador," and "America Was Promises."

It is appropriate to consider MacLeish's poetry in relation to his successful public life, for he holds as one of his ideals that the world of thought should be related to the world of action. His theory is that the public world of our time needs the kinds of meanings that poetry alone can discover. MacLeish feels, moreover, that the thinking man should be actively involved in the political and social movements of his time. In the offices MacLeish has held, as well as in his speeches, one may see to what extent he was himself committed.

MacLeish does not exploit in his poetry, as might be expected, what must have been so close at hand for him, the language of social discourse. In fact, he never makes use of such language in the witty and ironic manner of T. S. Eliot, but speaks nearly always in a tone that might be described as "personal" or "characteristic," sinking at its worst to an undistinguished and lethargic solemnity, but attaining at its best a bardic, although

individual, authority. He has sought rather to relate the "public world" to the "private world" in a more direct way. In *Conquistador* he has successfully produced an epic of the Americas and has tried the relations of private sensibility and history. In other instances, MacLeish seems to feel that the role of the thinker in history is to engage in summing up and pronouncement, as in "America Was Promises," in which sociology is grafted upon poetry in such a manner that neither survives.

MacLeish says in his *Poetry and Experience* that the deepest human need is to make life coherent and meaningful, and that poetry is one of the valid means—perhaps the most important—by which such sense and order may be achieved. The poet, he says, quoting the Chinese poet Lu Chi, is one who "traps Heaven and Earth in the cage of form." Poetry is a means of achieving meaning. He says in "Reasons for Music" (written for Wallace Stevens) that in this world there is no rest from the effort to impose order on confusion—order achieved in the still, adamant form of art. One may say of MacLeish in this respect that what should properly have been a hope, and possessed of an appropriate reticence, became a somewhat strident conviction. In his better poetry, in *The Pot of Earth* and *Conquistador*, for example, this predilection for form results in the achievement of an elevated and gracious order, but in his bad poetry the impulse degenerates into banality and truism. Often MacLeish's poetry does not assume, much less suggest, the variety of experience, and often he is even bold enough to violate, with his rigid schemata, the rightful multiplicity of the world.

On occasion MacLeish cannot resist the temptation to make a felicitous phrase, but on most occasions one senses in MacLeish a sincere love of felicity inasmuch as it is an expression of a certain way of achieving order and harmony in the world. But MacLeish does not seem to have

examined this tendency of his mind—to alight upon felicity—critically and thoroughly, as have many of the other modern poets. One thinks certainly of T. S. Eliot, when he uses, so cleverly, so tragically, rhyme, rhythm, and high sentiment. To some modern critical minds MacLeish's felicity can only seem facile, for he lacks the modern tough-mindedness. He does not seem to have considered with adequate clairvoyance his altogether human, altogether admirable impulse toward what Wallace Stevens calls integrations of instinct. But it is probably more fitting to say that MacLeish attempts a felicity he does not always achieve rather than to say he voices a sublimity he does not really feel.

A cursory glance at MacLeish's poetry may lead the reader to accuse him of vague thinking. It is not that MacLeish is unaware of the important ideas of his time, but that perhaps he has not examined some of them critically, or has at least not considered with sufficient perspicacity the relationship of these ideas to his own mind.

At times MacLeish seems unaware of the tendency of his mind to reduce experience to formula. He praises in *Poetry and Experience* Keats's negative capability, the ability to live without certainty, in mystery and in doubt, and it is indeed unfortunate that MacLeish himself in his poetry was not always able to maintain this precarious and sacred balance.

In some of his long poems, as in "Einstein," *The Pot of Earth*, and *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, he does examine the relationship of the mind to the world, or more specifically to "nature," and one senses here that he is no longer the fabricator of the shorter poems where, with an aestheticism that yields only sterility, he plucks an image from the natural world, pastes it upon his thought, and finds that in the process the image has deprived the thought of its complexity, and the thought has deprived the image of its rich substantiality. He uses as the epigraph to

The Pot of Earth a description, from Sir James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, of the ancient ceremonies of Adonis, a god of vegetation, and he attempts in the poem to come to terms with nature in the fruitful and mysterious way of the ancients; yet he knows that this is not quite possible. He quotes, after the passage from Frazer, the lines from *Hamlet*: "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god-kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter? . . . Let her not walk i' the sun—" and one feels that MacLeish is suggesting here what might be called the modern "civilized" horror of nature's fecundity, promiscuity, ruthlessness, and even perhaps of her energy. Like *Hamlet*, MacLeish, in *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish* is bookish and introspective, skeptical that one may not find in nature, as one finds in words, a principle of malleable equivalence.

In "Einstein," MacLeish portrays a mind which can undo the manifestations of nature. Yet even so, nature still resists his attempts at penetration and turns him back to find answers within his own nature. Even though MacLeish in "Einstein" sets himself the difficult task of portraying the relationship of a mind of genius to the world, he does not succeed in doing more than expressing the obvious graciously, although he does create in "Einstein," as he does not in most of his

other poems, an illusion of what might be called the living relationship of consciousness to the world.

One may look in vain in MacLeish's poetry for a tough and thought-provoking fabric of meanings, but find in its place the elegant compositions of a mind dominated by sensibility. MacLeish's best achievement is in the genre of lyrical poetry skillfully shaped as an expression of sensibility. It may be said that in some respects he stands to the Modernist movement in poetry as Verlaine stood to the Symbolists. At his best, MacLeish achieves an elegance which is vital and unschematic. There are long descriptive passages in many of his poems, in *Conquistador* and *The Pot of Earth*, for example, which seem intent upon proving nothing except that, as Ezra Pound said of the Imagists, "a hawk is a hawk." These are passages of refined and vigorous sensibility in which the infinite richness of experience is suggested rather than cast into the confinement of form. In like manner, MacLeish sometimes offers brief perceptions of a perfect gratuitousness, sometimes irrelevant to the meaning of the poem, but delightful and veracious in their own right. At his best the poet exhibits the expectation of an aristocratic sensibility: that experience will indeed yield up from its abundance certain felicities.

THE POETRY OF MacNEICE

Author: Louis MacNeice (1907-1963)

Principal published works: *Blind Fireworks*, 1929; *Poems*, 1935; *The Earth Compels*, 1938; *Autumn Journal*, 1939; *The Last Ditch*, 1940; *Plant and Phantom*, 1941; *Springboard: Poems 1940-1944*, 1944; *Holes in the Sky: Poems 1944-1947*, 1948; *Ten Burnt Offerings*, 1952; *Autumn Sequel: A Rhetorical Poem in XXVI Cantos*, 1954; *Visitations*, 1957; *Eighty-five Poems*, 1959; *Solstices*, 1961; *The Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice*, 1967

Louis MacNeice was associated in the 1930's with Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden and, like them, directed his poetry to recording, and lamenting, the contemporary, metropolitan scene and the breakdown of older values. MacNeice's

poems, published steadily since 1929, in recent years become more and more preoccupied with the past, the poet's lost youth and, at times, his sense of having lost his freshness as a poet.

At his best, he succeeded in mingling

the commonplace and even trivial with an ironically acute insight to produce a memorable portrait of the modern industrial society. The rather forlorn and wistful attempts of metropolitan man to achieve some satisfaction in a generally treadmill life were chronicled by MacNeice in tones of mild sympathy, more detachment and, sometimes, of condescension. The rhythms are very close to prose or speech, the rhyming is often deliberately banal in order to achieve a caustically comic effect, and, occasionally, doggerel is used to express something of the tired, cheapened quality of a wasteland society. One of his best poems is "Sunday Morning," in which his coupling of the once-valued expanding heart of man and the newly banal, vulgar substitution of working with his car on a Sunday morning illustrates a typical kind of rhetoric as well as MacNeice's sense of how the romantic ambitions of the previous, prewar generations have become cheapened and empty of anything but momentary and shallow diversion. Disillusionment is everywhere, but the poet maintains a detached, resigned pose most of the time. In the poem, the car is readied, and the weekenders speed to Hindhead, trying to recapture something of the past and hold firmly to it in the flow of time measured by dull days and dragging weeks. Life thus becomes escape from boredom, meaninglessness, and a march of time which only destroys old dreams. There is no escape.

While, especially in his poems of the 1930's, MacNeice is often highly successful in expressing the sadness and wistful regret of modern men caught between two wars, his verse becomes increasingly tired itself, even boring, as the rhythms grow stale and prosaic or "talky"; the constant use of comic or merely doggerel rhyme and the undifferentiated tone of slightly supercilious disillusionment, constantly verging on the merely nostalgic, wear thin. The symbols of planned obsolescence and overproduction which in turn signify the hopeless and helpless

vulgarity and sterility of "modern life" cease either to surprise or to shock when constantly juxtaposed with older and "higher" thoughts. The studied use of the banal ends in sinking the poetry beneath its own dead weight. In *Autumn Journal*, which is MacNeice's long counterpart of Auden's "September 1, 1939," the poet is not at his worst, but one can see the direction of his thought in his ironic criticism of the modern world.

MacNeice's ability to use dance-hall rhythms and clichés to good satiric purpose is prominent in his poem "Bagpipe Music." The cleverness of parody and the cliché, like the colloquial idiom, belong strictly to a time and place, and though MacNeice has recorded that time, often tellingly, he has lacked the larger gifts of either Spender or, especially of the protean, effervescent Auden which are necessary for a lasting poetry.

MacNeice constantly counterpoises the older traditions and values with the present state of society. Playing off the old pastoral illusions, in "Nuts in May" he describes the breakdown of the traditional values.

MacNeice's early influence was Edith Sitwell, and then, like Auden, C. D. Lewis and Spender, the war poetry of Sassoon and Owen. The political and moral chaos of the war and the decades following it, the manifestoes of Hulme, Pound, and Eliot for a "harder" and more "classical" poetry, the teeming and dingy metropolis, all lay behind the sort of poetry MacNeice and his friends wrote. It seemed as if all the world had turned a final corner away from the past, and the aestheticism of the 1890's the pastoral poetry of the Georgians, in fact, the whole Keatsian and Tennysonian tradition seemed no longer a possible idiom in which to express the "new world" of quiet terror, cataclysm, and tenements. Instead, the "new" verse, close to colloquial speech, used the clichés of the shopgirl, the banalities of the popular song, the cadences of jazz, and the dance hall. In such a world, the British Mu-

seum seemed an anomaly, where one discovered poor scholars, cranks, and hacks.

Another poem, similar to "The British Museum Reading Room," is entitled, simply, "Museums," and jokingly expresses MacNeice's conviction that the Past is now only the past, and the museum is where we go to find a tenuous kind of escape or refuge. MacNeice seldom "reaches" for a metaphor or a poetic effect. He uses materials ready at hand, even clichés, and often produces an

adroit and truly poignant image of modern life. His tone, at best, is controlled, detached, yet sad and intelligent. He represented an awareness of self and of reality which is so scrupulous as almost to preclude poetry. He had little or none of Spender's romanticism. His materials sometimes failed him, and do so increasingly with the passage of time away from that period when both the poetry and the disillusionment at least had the grace of novelty.

THE POETRY OF MARIANNE MOORE

Author: Marianne Moore (1887-)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1921; *Observations*, 1924; *Selected Poems*, 1935; *The Pangolin and Other Verse*, 1936; *What Are Years*, 1941; *Nevertheless*, 1944; *Collected Poems*, 1951; *The Fables of La Fontaine*, 1954; *Predilections*, 1955; *Like a Bulwark*, 1956; *O to Be a Dragon*, 1959; *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*, 1967

Marianne Moore, probably the most individualistic American poet writing today, has been "modern" ever since she was first published in 1921. Although she has influenced scores of writers, her poetry is inimitable and unparaphrasable, with an excellence still distinctly her own. She is a rare combination of "poet's poet" and advice-giving moralist. As a "modern" poet in New York in the 1920's, many readers found her poetry "esoteric": it was much admired by the select group of modern poets headquartering there, but almost unintelligible to most readers, and certainly did not seem great because most of her topics appeared inconsequential. Her modernism, contrary to writers influenced by T. S. Eliot during the same period, led her away from philosophy; she was never disenchanted by the world around her.

On the contrary, the enchantment she finds is everywhere, even in "business documents and school books." Her fantastic footnotes are from encyclopedias, newspapers, *National Geographic*, documentary films, Tolstoy's diary—everywhere. She seeks to show reality, the genuine.

Miss Moore's favorite "inconsequential

topic" is animals. The descriptions of her often exotic menagerie—"The Pangolin," "The Jerboa," "The Plumet Basilisk," "The Frigate Pelican," and monkeys, snakes, mongooses, a buffalo, fish, elephants, a snail—illustrate above all her uncanny accuracy as an observer. The smallest details are included to characterize her animals. In "The Pangolin" her description could be a stage director's explanation of reasons behind actions so that his cast will make their stage movements believable. One could walk like a Pangolin after hearing Miss Moore's instructions.

There are as many examples of minute observation in her poems as there are lines. Perhaps Miss Moore's observations are somewhat difficult to follow; after all, most readers' minds are not as enchanted as hers. The difficulty results, not from inaccuracy, but from her ability to compress so much description into so few unemphasized words. She is, in a way, trying to train her readers to be observers too.

As it often does, the title "The Fish" serves also as the first line. The size of the sea life diminishes as the poem progresses; both order and structure are care-

fully planned. Like a scientist, Miss Moore works from specifics to generalizations in all of her poems ("The illustration/is nothing to you without the application"). Her animal poems, more specifically, are like the works of a naturalist interested in animals as animals, not as symbols of people. Nevertheless, Miss Moore is a moralist. Her animal poems, which show what she admires in animals, illustrate what she wants to admire in humans. In fact, most of her animal poems fit into a broader category often termed "essays in verse." She defends the cat, "Peter," for example, by reminding us to be true to our own natures.

As animals are imperfect, so are people. Miss Moore admires honestly imperfect efforts because they demand fortitude; "Nevertheless" points out that the most beautiful design comes from "a struggle" in the strawberry plant, and that even the strongest plants must endure hardships. In fact, that is why they are the strongest. She sees beauty and bravery in the simplest things, and in "The Face" she identifies the things that help define her aims as a poet: order, ardor, simplicity, inquiry.

Many of Miss Moore's essays in verse are about the poet and the art of poetry. Her most famous, and her most overt statement about content, is found in the earlier, fuller version "Poetry." Miss Moore's poems also discuss style. Her own emphasis on compactness is explained in "To a Snail." In "The Labors of Hercules" she speaks to critics of content and style. It is her straightforwardness "like electricity" which controls her metrical individuality.

The strikingly individualistic form of Miss Moore's verse is neither free verse nor accented rhythms. Her model is

French: words are neither accented nor emphasized; neither do they metrically rhyme. Instead, the pattern of syllables per line in each stanza is repeated in the next stanza. This unusual quality and brilliance contribute to the total effect of the previously cited poems.

The conversational effect of unaccented syllabication is consistent with Miss Moore's advice in "Silence," in which she declares that the deepest emotions are always revealed in silence and restraint. The reason for the restraint is given in "The Student," who sometimes appears untouched, not because he is lacking in feeling but because he feels too intensely. The formality of Miss Moore's rigid, yet perfectly controlled, mechanics is indeed formidable until the magic of her tone, some implication of the heart, rescues us. Miss Moore never separates intelligence from emotion and sensitivity.

It is her love in her observations that makes her poems which are so carefully constructed and controlled, so modern and experimental, also so individualistic. While critics and poets are won by her mechanical perfections, by her perceptive wit and intelligence, the public appreciates poetry which dismisses the trivial and talks about important things like real animals, birds, snakes, snails, and toads. Her ability to delight, to record with sensitive perception and appreciation the things of this world, and to convince us of its reality provide the reasons for Miss Moore's popularity and literary reputation among both scholars and general readers. It is just these qualities which make her an individualistic and enchanting part of the American literary tradition.

THE POETRY OF MAROT

Author: Clément Marot (1496-1544)

Principal published works: *L'Adolescence clémentine*, 1532; *La Suite de l'Adolescence clémentine*, 1533-1534; *Le Premier livre de la Métamorphose d'Ovide*, 1534; *Oeuvres*, 1538 (one edition printed by Dolet, one by Gryphius)

Superficially, unjustly criticized by Du Bellay as being nothing but rhymed prose, the poetry of Clément Marot, by its conscious innovations clearly anticipated and facilitated the work of the *Pléiade* poets in the renewal of French poetry. By reason of its naturalness and freedom, the best part of Marot's work has indeed aged less than the poetry of his illustrious successor, Pierre de Ronsard. Marot's witty, elliptical manner, imitated in epigrams and narrative poetry, appears in the work of no less figures than La Fontaine in the seventeenth century, Voltaire in the eighteenth, while through his sense of fantasy, Marot has been linked with the modern French "chansonniers."

A page to François I's secretary of finance in 1515, Marot, under the tutelage of his poet father, daily practiced the techniques of the largely formalistic *Rhétoriqueur* poetry. His verses between 1515 and 1526 show the influence of this school of the expiring Middle Ages. Yet there are exceptions.

The "Temple de Cupido" by its subject and by its allegorical form is related to the part-lyrical, part-didactic poetry of the Middle Ages. Marot follows the *Rhétoriqueurs* here, yet he manages to avoid their excesses, as had Jean Lemaire de Belges, whom he sought to emulate. At the other end of this period is the satirical poem "L'Enfer." Having been imprisoned on the heretical charge of eating "lard en carême" (meat during Lent), Marot here attacks the magistrates and their "justice." In this, his first major poem, Marot begins to free himself from *Rhétoriqueur* traditions. Allegory is presented through the simple procedure of comparing the Châtelet prison to Hades, its officials to a Rhadamanthus, a Cerberus and so on; introducing his victims and satirizing them without benefit of the familiar medieval dream sequence, Marot makes a weapon of allegory in which fantasy and reality mixed produce comic and satiric effects.

Youthful works composed mainly be-

tween these two longer poems include the *Rondeaux*, *Ballades*, *Chants royaux*, *Chansons* (a variety of genres set to music). Marot succeeded in giving literary respectability to these latter poems without losing their simple, popular character. The *Ballades*, personal, political, satirical, show characteristics of Marot's mature manner: the expressive refrain, delicate development of an emotion; wit, caustic gibes, as in the "Chant de Mai," "Ballade à la Duchesse d'Alençon," and "De Frère Lubin." Longfellow translated the last as "Friar Lubin":

To gallop off to town post-haste,
So oft, the times I cannot tell;
To do vile deed, nor feel disgraced,—
Friar Lubin will do it well.
But a sober life to lead,
To honor virtue, and pursue it,
That's a pious, Christian deed,—
Friar Lubin cannot do it.

To mingle, with a knowing smile,
The goods of others with his own,
And leave you without cross or pile,
Friar Lubin stands alone.
To say 'tis yours is all in vain,
If once he lays his finger to it;
For as to giving back again,
Friar Lubin cannot do it.

With flattering words and gentle tone,
To woo and win some guileless maid,
Cunning pander need you none,—
Friar Lubin knows the trade.
Loud preacheth he sobriety,
But as for water, doth eschew it;
Your dog may drink it,—but not he;
Friar Lubin cannot do it.

Leigh Hunt was another of Marot's translators. "Madame D'Albert's Laugh" is as follows:

Yes! that fair neck, too beautiful by
half,
Those eyes, that voice, that bloom, all
do her honor;
Yet, after all, that little giddy laugh
Is what, in my mind, sits the best upon
her.

Good God! 'twould make the very
streets and ways,

Through which she passes, burst into
 a pleasure!
 Did melancholy come to mar my days
 And kill me in the lap of too much
 leisure,
 No spell were wanting, from the dead
 to raise me,
 But only that sweet laugh wherewith
 she slays me.

The Rondeaux, more personal, express fleeting moments of love, joy, anger, irony ("De sa grande amie," "De l'amour du siècle antique"). The Chants royaux, a kind of double ballade, deal with *topoi* such as the Virginity of Mary, the pleasures and miseries of love.

It was through satire that Marot most quickly and clearly discarded Rhétoriqueur techniques and found his personal manner after 1527, though he continued to compose some official poetry in the old manner. The Coqs-à-l'âne, a genre created by Marot in or about 1531, contain his most personal thoughts, are his preferred satirical medium in attacks against the Church, priests, and his personal enemies. Exuberant fantasy beneath a consciously obscure, incoherent form characterize the coq-à-l'âne, the genre being related, Professor C. A. Mayer believes, to the medieval, didactic "sottie." The old expression "sauter du coq à l'âne" (literally to "jump from Rooster to Ass"), meaning to talk incoherently, suggests the title of this genre. Despite his light "poésie de circonstance," official, command performances (instant poetry?), Marot's work is fundamentally satiric; in contemporary eyes he was a bold fighter attacking the abuses of his time, sharing that revolutionary Renaissance spirit which found expression in Erasmus or Rabelais. Marot has been linked with medieval tradition through his irreverent "esprit gaulois," yet this connection is somewhat tenuous, to be seen in pieces of lesser importance, the fixed-form ballades and rondeaux.

In large measure, to Marot belongs the honor of breaking with the Rhétoriqueur tradition, of beginning a renewal

of French poetry. If one thinks of the *Pléiade's* work in terms of translation, imitation, emulation of the Greek and Latin poets, Marot has his place here too, before them. In his formally serious lyric poetry he best practices the imitation and contamination of classical models recommended by Du Bellay. This would include the *Épithalames*, the *Eglogues*, the *Elégies* (the least successful), and the *Cantiques*. Professor C. A. Mayer has pointed out how Marot's hesitation in classifying and defining such forms as these show his preoccupation with finding, not always successfully, a vehicle for grave and official lyricism, with reorienting French poetry by re-creating classical forms ten years before Ronsard's *Odes*. (See the *Cantique* "Le Dieu Gard de Marot à la Cour de France"; the *Eglogue* "L'Avant-Naissance du troisième enfant de Madame la Duchesse de Ferrare," with its praise of Renaissance values and confidence in Man; the *Eglogue* "De Marot au Rou, sous les noms de Pan et Robin.")

During the middle and late 1530's the *topoi* of predecessors are thus replaced by intelligent imitation and emulation: the Horatian metaphor of the boatman describing Marot's flight into exile (*Épître* "Au Rou du temps de son exil à Ferrare"); the theme of Ulysses (borrowed from Ovid) anticipating the poetry of nostalgia of Du Bellay (*Épître* "Au tresvertueux prince, François, Dauphin de France"). There is the comment on the poet's function (*Épître* "Au Dauphin") where, anticipating the doctrine of the *Pléiade*, Marot promises the King and the Dauphin immortality through his verses. His concern with the judgment of posterity appears in lines like: "Maint vivront peu, moi éternellement." He is read universally; people say "C'est Clément." This pride of being what he is is surely no less than that of Ronsard himself.

Marot owes his transformation to the Courts of François I and Marguerite d'Angoulême, Italianate and humanizing.

In exile at Ferrare, he was influenced by neo-Petrarchan poetry and sentiments, wrote the first sonnet in French, launched the fashion of the *Blasons du corps féminin*, and began putting the Psalms into verse. Here he wrote some of his best *Épîtres*, unexcelled vehicle of his genius. Difficult to define by reason of their variety of tone and subject, the *Épîtres*, letters in verse, free in form, personal, contain Marot's sharpest wit and satire, his bitterest reflections, highest lyricism. (See *Épîtres* mentioned above, also "Au Roi pour avoir été dérobé.")

One aspect of Marot's art, defined by Boileau as "élégant badinage," consists of self-mockery, obvious affirmation, specious denial, jesting (sometimes tense with emotion) through feigned naïveté and reticence. The other principal aspect, Marot's narrative style, is characterized by vividness and picturesqueness deriving from concrete imagery, an elliptical turn of phrase. Fantasy, mixed with reality, results in a satiric weapon of considerable force (light-hearted, sly in "Au Roi pour avoir été dérobé"; direct, indignant in the "Épître de Frippelippes"). As with fantasy, the incoherence of the coqs-à-l'âne is not gratuitous, but directed by satiric intent, which gives a unity to apparently unconnected allusions, rapidly passed in review, as in the second *Coq-à-l'âne*.

Reflected in important parts of his work, Marot's religious faith requires some comment. Introduced to the ideas

of the early Reformation at Marguerite's court, he would seem to have adopted the lessons of Evangelism in spirit if not in precept. He went into exile twice, in 1534 and again in 1542, because of his reputed Lutheranism. In 1534 he had written: "... Point ne suis Luthériste/ Ne zwinglien, encore moins Papiste." This was before the *Affaire des Placards*. In 1538 (a less relaxed moment) when putting together his edition of the *Oeuvres*, Marot had emended the line: "Ne Zwinglien, et moins Anabaptiste." His protestations to the king, while in exile in 1535 were moving oratory, but ambiguous. Was Marot fickle? Or a coward? It seems likely that his position was in fact dictated more by an independent spirit, rebelling against the stupidity of the Sorbonne, the persecutions of the Papacy, than by any deep religious conviction. He did not remain long with Calvin either, though perhaps he ran out of money and work.

The traditional portrait of Marot as light-hearted, unstable, cowardly seems false. He was impulsive, compromising himself on occasion; independent in spirit, unable to keep his sharp tongue in cheek; obliged by circumstance to flatter; no martyr, but no coward either. In his own age, with Montaigne, he protested against torture in "L'Enfer," read the poem to François himself. Above all, he should be remembered as one of the most gifted and delightful poets of the sixteenth century.

THE POETRY OF MAYAKOVSKY

Author: Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930)

First published: Vladimir Mayakovsky: *A Tragedy*, 1913; *The Cloud in Trousers*, 1915; *The Backbone Flute*, 1915; *War and Peace*, 1916; *Man*, 1917; *Mystery Bouffe*, 1918; 150,000,000, 1920; Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 1924; *My Discovery of America*, 1925-1926; *At The Top of My Voice*, 1930

Futurism was founded in 1910 by Viktor (Velemir) Khlebnikov, who was primarily interested in etymology. Under Khlebnikov's leadership, the Futurists

created a "trans-verse" language, one which separated words from their meanings and made their sound value all-important. The only kind of meaning a

transverse poem might have would be a certain suggestive and admittedly very elusive quality. But perhaps more than an experiment with language, Futurism was the natural revolt from Symbolism.

The Symbolist movement had been strong from 1894 to 1910, during which time such poets as Bely and Blok had expounded a personal retreat from reality. They spoke of a rather closed mysticism and its aestheticist cult of pure beauty which had to be preceded by separation from, and unconcern for, all the events of daily life. The Futurists scorned the Symbolist ideals and followed the realities of modern life. But they went much further than simply presenting a new alternative to the Symbolist interpretation of life. Their aim was to shock the bourgeois at any cost. The Futurist Manifesto of 1912, signed by Khlebnikov, Kruchonykh, Mayakovsky, and Burlyuk, was entitled "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste." It called the entire cultural tradition of the past stifling and insufferable. Pushkin, Dostoevski, and Tolstoy were to be thrown aside by the modern trends. The manifesto also called for hatred of the previously used language of literature and for an enrichment of the vocabulary by words arbitrarily chosen.

Although Russian Futurism was an offshoot of Italian Futurism founded by Marinelli, it had little in common with the Italian movement. Russian Futurists wanted to depict twentieth century life, but they deplored war and laid emphasis on technology. After the 1917 Revolution the Futurists, of all the writers and poets, gained the foremost position in Russian literary society, and their most outstanding representative was Vladimir Mayakovsky.

Although Mayakovsky had signed the 1912 Futurist Manifesto, he did not personally advocate Khlebnikov's "trans-sense" language. The words Mayakovsky invented were not based purely on sound effect; they consisted, rather, of a free and imaginative use of prefixes and suffixes producing blends that were both

new and readily comprehensible. In all his poems Mayakovsky used rhyme freely and deliberately created distorted echoes, often extending a single rhyme to four or more syllables involving several words. His poetry tends to have a constant number of stresses to the line but an irregular number of unstressed syllables. Above all, Mayakovsky's poetry was meant to be read aloud, and in his own public readings he gave these meters the rhythm of a drum beat or a march cadence.

Mayakovsky wrote primarily in two genres: that of political patriotic poems and that of love lyrics. He had accepted the October Revolution wholeheartedly, and between 1918 and 1920 he wrote thousands of jingles for propaganda posters. In his more formal political poems he satirized the enemies of the Revolution. In "Our March" he passionately denounced the bureaucrats and philistines of the new order. In *150,000,000*, Ivan, the essence of the Russian people, crosses the Atlantic to fight a hand-to-hand battle with Woodrow Wilson. Written during the American intervention in the Russian Civil War, the poem used Wilson as a symbol of the capitalist West. In "Paris" the poet tells the Eiffel Tower to instigate a revolution and then journey to Moscow where she will be given better care than in the West.

During the early 1920's Mayakovsky continued to write short propaganda verses in support of socialist reform and government control. Although this was his main preoccupation, he did manage to produce some lyrical poems. One of Mayakovsky's earliest love poems was "The Cloud in Trousers" in which the poet calls a fire brigade to extinguish his burning heart. "I Love" is a poem to Lily Brik, wife of Osip Brik, a critic and editor. In it Mayakovsky states that hearts are found in a person's chest, but that anatomy made a mistake and he is a tingling heart from head to toe. In 1923, Lily left Mayakovsky for another man. "About That" is a desperate lament over her infidelity.

Mayakovsky was well aware of the poet's conflict between devotion to personal themes and to Communism. In the poem "Letter from Paris to Comrade Kostrov on the Nature of Love," the poet claims that such a man as Kostrov cannot understand or prevent a poet's passion. He declares that to the last beat of his heart he will sing simple and human love. In 1925, Mayakovsky undertook a long trip to western Europe and America which resulted in a critical account of his life under capitalism, *My Discovery of America*. Although he admired American technology, he felt it was not exclusively beneficial, and he criticized capitalism as breeding inequality and injustice. On returning to the Soviet Union, Mayakovsky wrote the long poem "All Right" which, without reservation, praised Soviet progress. "Black and White," written during the same period, is a rather biting poem inspired during his Mexican tour. In it he asserts that the white man eats the ripe, juicy pineapples, the black man the weather-rotted fruit; that the white man gets the best jobs, the black man only back-breaking labor.

With his two satirical plays, *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*, written in the late 1920's, Mayakovsky again directed his attention to political and social themes. But the picture of Soviet society that emerges in them is far from positive. In the first part of *The Bedbug* the main character, a vulgar and repulsive official, has power and a standard of living beyond his deserts simply because he owns a Party card. In the second part, set in 1978, sex, romance, vodka, and tobacco no longer exist, and the protagonist has become a zoological curiosity. In this dehumanized world of the future, this repulsive figure becomes a tragic hero searching for love in a loveless state. *The Bathhouse* is a grotesque satire against bureaucracy in the Soviet state.

During the last years of his life Mayakovsky abandoned Bolshevism. He began

to feel increasingly that in the new era love was a discarded fiction and his own efforts, a rejected martyrdom. In his last important poem, the unfinished "At the Top of My Voice," Mayakovsky pointed up what he saw as his intentional self-sacrifice to the aspirations of the Revolution, saying that he had subdued himself, trampling on the throat of his song. What had been a craving for melodrama and anarchy turned to tragedy when, on April 14, 1930, Mayakovsky killed himself.

Four years earlier, in the poem "To Sergei Esenin," on the occasion of that poet's suicide, Mayakovsky had written that it is not hard to die; to shape life is more difficult. In 1927, Mayakovsky said he had written this poem not to glorify the beauty of death but to celebrate life and the joy to be found along the most difficult of all roads, the road leading toward Communism.

It has been said that Mayakovsky's tragedy lay in his writing lyric poems in an unlyrical era. Whether this is true or not, Mayakovsky was, finally, overcome by depression and gloom. In his own suicide note he enjoined his comrades not to think him weak-spirited. There was nothing else he could do. Soviet critics denounced his suicide as a bourgeois act, but they have since changed their minds. Today Mayakovsky is considered the greatest poet of the Soviet Revolution, remembered not so much for his ideas as for the spirit of his verse. His ideas are often superficial or naïve, and his propaganda poems after the Revolution are inferior to his other work. But in the intensity and spirit of his lyrical poems he does justify his occupation of the place history has accorded him. Of the utter loneliness of unrequited love he speaks with a moving blend of self-pity and tenderness. But he is at his best in those verses that are at once coarse, lyrical, and passionate.

THE POETRY OF MELVILLE

Author: Herman Melville (1819-1891)

First published: *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, 1866; *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*, 1876; *John Marr and Other Sailors*, 1888; *Timoleon*, 1891

Though a few of Herman Melville's short poems have been reprinted in anthologies of American literature, he is known almost exclusively for his prose fiction. The Melville biographers and critics who mention the poetry usually pass quickly over it, often giving the impression that it may interest some curious readers but that it has no great importance as compared with his novels and stories. In recent years, however, considerable interest has been shown in Melville as a poet.

Most of Melville's poetry was published during his lifetime, but it drew little attention, partly because the last two volumes were published in editions of only twenty-five copies each. A number of previously unpublished poems did not appear until 1924 in the final volume of the Standard Edition of Melville's works. A critical edition of the poems (not including the lengthy *Clarel*, which occupies two volumes in the Standard Edition) was published in 1947 with explanatory notes and textual notes by Howard P. Vincent. A similar edition of *Clarel*, with a critical analytical introduction by Walter E. Bezanson, came out in 1961. Nearly a century after its original publication, Melville's *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* was re-issued in 1963 as *The Battle-Pieces of Herman Melville* in a handsomely printed and profusely illustrated edition with an introduction and extensive notes by Henning Cohen. The following year Mr. Cohen brought out a volume of *Selected Poems of Herman Melville*, which contains, in addition to many of the poems in Vincent's edition, several passages from *Clarel* and over eighty pages of comment by the editor on individual poems. Cohen quotes many of Melville's notes to the poems and frequently draws attention to the relationship between certain poems

and Melville's various works of fiction.

Melville's first published volume of verse did not appear until 1866, and most of his extant verse was written in the last thirty-five years of his life. But his symbolic novel *Mardi*, published in 1849, contains some romantic effusions by the poet Yoomy and several other brief poems. In 1860, when Melville sailed for San Francisco on his brother's ship, he left with his wife a manuscript volume of poems for which she was to find a publisher if possible. No publisher was found, but many of the poems in *Timoleon*, which came out in the year of Melville's death, may be among those in the earlier unpublished book.

A number of critics and biographers have called attention to the difficulties which face the beginning reader of Melville's verse. Newton Arvin has observed that Melville the poet seems to be a prose writer working with verse. Robert Penn Warren has found the seemingly inept distortions and wrenchings in many lines to represent a possible attempt to develop a style fitted to a man of Melville's masculine temperament. Laurence Barrett sees the violences and wrenchings as often effective, especially upon rereading, and as conscious technical devices being used sometimes awkwardly but occasionally with marked success.

Melville explains in a prefatory note to *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* that most of the poems in the volume were the result of an impulse imparted by the fall of Richmond in 1865. The arrangement is generally chronological but not strictly so. The first poem, "The Portent," concerns the hanging of John Brown on December 2, 1859, and most of the poems at the end of the volume relate to events of 1864 and 1865, though several return to earlier years of the war. Among the best poems are "The Por-

text," "The Conflict of Convictions," "The March into Virginia," "The Temeraire," "Malvern Hill," and "The Martyr."

In "The Portent" the body of John Brown hangs swaying from the scaffold beam, throwing a symbolic shadow on the green of the Shenandoah Valley which will be stained later with so much red. As the hangman's cap covers Brown's face, so the future is veiled, but the streaming beard of "Weird John Brown" ominously forecasts the "meteor of the war."

"The Conflict of Convictions," with its obvious allusions to the war in Heaven in *Paradise Lost*, shows an indifferent God who will not stop men when they make their choices: "The People spread like a weedy grass, / The thing they will they bring to pass." The boyish soldiers in "The March into Virginia" proceed into the "leafy neighborhood" near Manassas with the lightsome joyousness of picnickers. But, says Melville, some in the next three days will "Perish, enlightened by the volied glare," and others will survive to endure the shame of a second defeat in the same area a few weeks later. In "The Temeraire" an old Englishman fondly and sadly recalls the passing away forever of the glorious oldtime sea battles of the great wooden sailing ships, while he muses on the fight between the small and unromantic ironclads *Monitor* and *Merri-mac*.

"Shiloh" is a brief and beautiful requiem for the soldiers who fell there and who lie now "While over them the swallows skim, / And all is hushed at Shiloh." As the swallows in this poem symbolize the indifference of nature to man's bloody conflicts, so do the elms in "Malvern Hill":

We elms of Malvern Hill
Remember every thing;
But sap the twig will fill:
Wag the world how it will,
Leaves must be green in spring.

"The Martyr" portrays poetically the grief over the land on the day of Lincoln's

death, but in its refrain it anticipates the spirit of vengefulness which the murder incited: "Beware the People weeping/
When they bare the iron hand."

Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land, Melville's second book of poetry, is a single poem of twenty thousand lines inspired by a journey to Palestine in 1857 and by Melville's speculations on theology, philosophy, science, belief, doubt, and the nature of the human soul. Newton Arvin has called it a novel of ideas in verse, which suggests the slight significance of its story line as compared with the space devoted to the opposed views of the numerous pilgrims who appear, disappear, and reappear in the 150 cantos. The basic story concerns young Clarel, a spiritually troubled American divinity student who seeks a resolution of his inner conflict between faith and doubt through a journey to the Holy Land. He falls in love with Ruth, whose American-Jewish father is murdered. While she is in mourning for her father, Clarel joins a group of pilgrims on a journey to various parts of Palestine. On his return he learns that Ruth has died of grief, and after he had watched the burial of Ruth and her mother he is left at the end of the poem still pondering the ways of God and the fate of man.

Among the pilgrims with whom Clarel is briefly associated are Celio, a handsome but hunchbacked Catholic, embittered and doubting; Rolfe, a former sailor who somewhat resembles Melville himself in his experiences and his appearance; Vine, an American whose creative ability and moral and aesthetic views suggest that Melville modeled him after his one-time friend Hawthorne; Derwent, an Anglican clergyman with pleasing manners but a superficial mind; Mortmain, a disillusioned idealist; and Ungar, an ex-Confederate officer who, while critical of man and his society and institutions, believes in man's need of a religious faith to sustain him in a confused and confusing world.

Clarel is difficult to read not merely

because of its great length but because, as Willard Thorp has said, it has all the faults of a "private" poem and thus one should come to it only after having learned much about Melville's moods and speculative questings. Though the poem itself leaves Clarel still searching for the sustaining faith he has not found, Melville, in the brief "Epilogue," directly addresses Clarel (and any doubting reader as well, one may assume), urging him to keep his heart to the end when "Emerge thou mayst from the last overwhelming sea, / And prove that death but routs life into victory."

In *John Marr and Other Sailors*, Melville, now nearing seventy, turned back nostalgically to his years as a sailor. The title poem may perhaps reflect a feeling the poet himself had often had, of being separated forever, through time and distance, from the companions of his youth. John Marr, living on a Middle-western prairie after having lost his wife and child, longs to hear from those he once knew, and he asks wistfully, "Why, lads, so silent here to me, / Your watchmate of times long ago?" Other poems with this mood of reminiscence are "Tom Deadlight," spoken by an old and dying petty officer, and "Jack Roy," which celebrates again the manly, ebullient character of Jack Chase, who was a character in *White-Jacket* and the sailor to whom Melville dedicated *Billy Budd*. Though "Billy in the Darbies" did not appear in the *John Marr* volume but was appended at the end of *Billy Budd*, it may be grouped with the sailor poems and it is one of the best of them. In form it is a ballad represented as having been composed by one of Billy's shipmates in memory of the beloved sailor after his hanging for the accidental killing of a ship's officer.

Two very different poems from the *John Marr* volume are "The Maldivé Shark" and "The Enviaible Isles." The first conveys poetically the theme that Melville had treated so often in his fiction: the mystery of evil in the world. The

shark is pictured as too stupid to find its own food unless guided by the "sleek little pilot-fish, azure and slim," who are the "Eyes and brains to the dotard lethargic and dull, / Pale revener of horrible meat." The reader is left to wonder, as did Melville, where lies evil? With the shark? with the pilot-fish? Or with the Creator who made them both and all else in creation? Or is the shark's voraciousness simply man's interpretation of evil, but really no evil at all, only a survival of the fittest, the dull-witted shark and his helpful little pilot-fish?

"The Enviaible Isles" pictures a green, sleepy land of swaying palms in the uplands and sweet fern and moss in the glades where "myriads lie / Dimpling in dream—unconscious mere, / While billows endless round the beaches die." As Cohen notes, the final word of the poem suggests, as do several other words, that these are the Isles of the Dead whose sleep is endless after the storms of life.

Of the poems in *Timoleon*, Melville's last published volume, many are travel poems related to the poet's trip to Europe and the Middle East in 1856-1857. In the title poem, based on the life of a Corinthian statesman and general, Cohen sees hidden autobiographical relationships. The second poem in the volume, "After the Pleasure Party," has attracted considerable comment and disagreement as to its meaning and even its form. Vincent calls it a dramatic monologue and takes issue with Lewis Mumford for having assigned the monologue to a man, Melville himself. Cohen resolves some of the ambiguity of the complex poem by assigning different parts to two speakers: a woman who is troubled over the discovery of her own strong sexuality; and the poet himself, who warns her of the power of Amor, god of love, and in the closing lines warns also "virgins everywhere, / O pray! Example take too, and have care."

The short poem "Monody" has a special appeal because of its commemoration of the brief friendship of Melville

and Hawthorne, the lengthy later separation calling forth after Hawthorne's death the anguished cry in the poem, "Ease me, a little ease, my song," The closing lines, "Glazed now with ice the cloistral vine / That hid the shyest grape," are a reminder also of the Hawthorne-like character Vine in *Clarel*.

Among the poems of Melville not printed until 1924 in the Standard Edition are a group collectively entitled *Weeds and Wildings, with A Rose or Two* which, according to Vincent, were obviously intended for private publication. Though for the most part unremarkable as poetry, they are of interest as reflecting Melville's happy life at Arrowhead, near Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where he had lived with his family from 1850 to 1863. A long prefatory introduc-

tion also shows his love for his wife Lizzie, who was in temperament quite different from him. One of the most unusual aspects of these poems written late in Melville's life is that they show a love of rural life and the quiet beauty of a nature very different from the terrifying, destructive natural world of his sea fiction and his sea poetry. Though one poem, "The American Aloe on Exhibition," appears to refer symbolically to Melville's disappointment in having lost his audience of earlier years, many of the other poems seem to suggest that in his closing years Melville was not the embittered man he is supposed by some commentators to have been, but rather a husband living a happy old age with his wife of many years.

THE POETRY OF MEREDITH

Author: George Meredith (1828-1909)

First published: *Poems*, 1851; *Modern Love*, 1862; *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, 1883; *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life*, 1887; *A Reading of Earth*, 1888; *A Reading of Life*, 1901; *Last Poems*, 1910

Best known as the author of fourteen novels, most notably *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist*, George Meredith may eventually find a securer place in literary history as a poet. *Modern Love*, a sequence of poems depicting the breakdown of a marriage, is already acknowledged as a masterwork of late Victorian verse, but in addition Meredith's mythological poems in praise of Earth are entirely worthy of more acclaim than they have received. A few critics, among them Douglas Bush and Siegfried Sassoon, have praised these poems, but in general, Meredith's verse has been almost entirely overlooked. In six principal volumes published from 1862 to 1901, Meredith wrote about 130 poems which make up his main collection, exclusive of the very early poems, some translations, and numerous epitaphs and occasional poems. His best work was published in 1883 as *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of*

Earth, and in 1888, *A Reading of Earth*. The poems of both volumes chiefly explain Meredith's nearly pagan faith in man as a part of natural process, and celebrate, often in terms of regeneration myths, the natural vitality and renewal which comes to men when they forego selfishness and live at one with nature.

Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.
 Nothing harms beneath the leaves
 More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
 Toss your heart up with the lark,
 Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
 Fair you fare.
 Only at a dread of dark
 Quaver, and they quit their form:
 Thousand eyeballs under hoods
 Have you by the hair.
 Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.

This, the first stanza of "The Woods of Westermain," expresses Meredith's be-

lief that nature is essentially mysterious "enchanted," and beneficent. Nature becomes a source of terror only to the man who has lost a sense of his dependence on nature. The man who is guilty of over-weening pride in intellect, who feels superior to nature, is cut off from Mother Earth and so conceives her to be brutish and even fearful. Meredith's attitude toward nature is remarkably advanced for his time. He accepts natural process—both in the way it limits men and also as a creative, evolutionary force—not in the Darwinian sense, nor in the way Tennyson sometimes conceived of science as a possible saving force, but rather in a "mythological" or even "pagan" sense. Man's scientific dominion over nature counts less for Meredith than man as being a part of nature. A man lives a single span of life, and nature provides him with that life. And though the individual dies, as each Spring "dies" in winter, man and nature are continually reborn and renewed within the great cycle of being. Because of this root belief, and because it provides a viewpoint which is essentially one of joy, and because according to it a man's false pride and sense of superiority can be ridiculed, Meredith's "philosophy" is profoundly comic. Indeed, he is one of the few truly comic writers in modern literature.

Influenced in his early poetry by the Keatsian tradition of Tennyson and even by the "Spasmodic School" of, notably, Richard H. Horne's "Orion," Meredith came under the influence of Swinburne, whose friend he was, and then, breaking away from aestheticism, developed his own, highly characteristic and often unique style which Douglas Bush has called "a bright, muscular idiom." His style is very compressed, his thought often overly convoluted, even tangled. His metaphors, rich in visual observation and sly analogies, come thick and fast and do not normally form a single developing "conceit" or extended metaphor. For these reasons—complexity of thought,

ambiguity of expression—Meredith's poetry was greeted by the reading public with some acclaim but more bewilderment. In his verbal tricks, his syncopated rhythms, his compression of language and often confusing use of metaphor, Meredith's poetry bears comparison to that of another contemporary who has been acclaimed as a great innovator, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Carols nature, counsel men.
Different notes as rook from wren
Hear we when our steps begin,
And the choice is cast within,
Where a robber raven's tale
Urges passion's nightingale.

Such a passage invites a certain amount of study and puzzling out; it will not become clear until the whole poem is studied, but the real point is to assess the immediate effect of the lines. The changing rhythms, the double alliteration, the close rhyming, are intended to produce a mysterious and somehow incantatory effect, as Meredith celebrates, and often preaches, the mysterious influence of nature on the inner man. Unlike Wordsworth, however, Meredith never really abstracts nature, does not perceive behind the concrete forms a quasi-platonic "idea" or ideal. Rather, he finds the deeper meaning within the forms of nature itself. It is in this sense that he has been called "pagan."

The same strong cadence marks "Hard Weather," in which Meredith sings of how storms serve to brace men, to force on them an awareness of nature's vitality. "Contention is the vital force," he chants, and he indicates how such a notion as "the survival of the fittest" can be viewed not with alarm but accepted as a principle of growth:

Earth yields the milk, but all her mind
Is vowed to thresh for stouter stock.
Her passion for old giantkind,
That scaled the mount, uphurled the
rock,
Devolves on them who read aright
Her meaning and devoutly serve.

To "read aright" requires the use of brains, believes Meredith. He decries sentimentality as well as crass naturalistic groveling in the gutter. "More brains, more brains," he once cried, testifying to his faith in man's ability to perceive rationally his destiny and being in nature, and so to bring himself into accord with nature, unified then in "blood, brain and spirit."

Meredith finds in Greek legend a character who symbolizes man's communion with nature. Melampus, the physician, preserved some snakes from death, and so was granted the power to understand the language of birds. The theme is not unrelated to that of spiritual renewal in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

Of earth and sun they are wise, they
nourish their broods,
Weave, build, hive, burrow and bat-
tle, take joy and pain
Like swimmers varying billows: never
in woods
Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all
sane
The woods revolve: as the tree its shad-
owing limns
To some resemblance in motion, the
rooted life
Restrains disorder: you hear the primi-
tive hymns
Of earth in woods issue wild of the
web of strife.

"The Day of the Daughter of Hades," a remarkable poem which celebrates the renewal of spring, is based on the myth of Persephone's return from Hades. Persephone's daughter, Skiagenia, accompanies her mother, spends a day with an earthling, and chants of the joy of earth's fecundity. She understands earth better than earthlings do because she is a daughter of Hades, of darkness. This mysterious linking of life and death, the earth and underground, is the poem's deepest meaning, and again Meredith's vision here is not unrelated to

D. H. Lawrence's belief in the deeply-rooted instinctual life.

To accept the good of nature, pain and death must also be accepted, and Meredith had to struggle to keep his faith in earth despite personal loss, ill health, and discouragement. "A Faith on Trial" records this struggle, but *Modern Love*, published in 1862, is the key poem to an understanding of the tragic side of Meredith's vision of life. This sequence is closer in kind to the other dramatic monologues which Meredith wrote, such as "Juggling Jerry" and "The Old Chartist." His first wife, the daughter of Thomas Love Peacock, had deserted him in 1858 and died in 1861. *Modern Love* dramatizes the bitter psychological warfare of a couple who lose their early romantic and somewhat illusory love and proceed to subtly cut up each other and themselves. The wife finally commits suicide. Meredith's conclusion is typically philosophical and humane:

Then each applied to each that fatal
knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to end-
less dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our
life!—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's
force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of war-
rior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the
shore!

And, again:

I see no sin:
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God
wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the
plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

Nature can be harsh, but never wantonly cruel. Only men, in their illusions and pride, can be cruel. Nature, "read aright" disciplines the unruly passions,

brings solace, gives strength. Meredith's renewed faith in Earth is intensely felt and is conveyed not infrequently with

great eloquence and energy in poems remarkable both for vigor of thought and compressed, rhythmically exciting verse.

THE POETRY OF MICHELANGELO

Author: Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564)

First published: *Collected Poetry*, 1623

The fame of Michelangelo Buonarroti as a painter and a sculptor has far outdistanced his reputation as a poet. This is unfortunate, for while it is open to question whether Michelangelo could have ever developed into a world poet of a stature equivalent to his stature in the plastic arts, his reputation as a poet is now established. Modern critics admit that he is an important Renaissance Italian poet, and by many he is considered the best Italian lyric poet of the sixteenth century.

The reasons for the slow growth of Michelangelo's poetic reputation are easy to identify. First, even in his own day, while his poetry was extravagantly praised by a circle of friends, it was Michelangelo's painting and sculpture that drew the eyes of the world at large. Moreover, his poetry was not published until 1623, eighty-nine years after his death, and then only in an incomplete, much edited, and censored edition. By that time the Renaissance style of writing was being rapidly replaced by the neo-classical style throughout Europe, and the poems did not attract major attention. It was not until the early nineteenth century, when the Romantics were rediscovering the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, that complete and well edited editions of the poetry began to appear; and only in our century have completely authoritative editions been published.

Michelangelo never took his poetry seriously enough to collect, revise, or preserve the whole of it. While he considered himself a professional painter and sculptor, he, like almost every poet of the Renaissance, thought of himself as an amateur. For poetry was in that age val-

ued as a social pastime and a gentleman's skill; and even if a man did think of himself as a professional poet, it was bad form to act as if he did. This Renaissance attitude has given scholars much trouble, and only after much searching have they managed to locate in various places 343 separate poems and poetic fragments (and many variants) by Michelangelo. Most of these were composed after 1530.

Though the poetry is sometimes written in the traditional Petrarchan manner, and though the conventions of neo-Platonism are also important in the work, the best poems are characterized by Michelangelo's unique style. The structure and syntax, and even the grammar, are twisted and full of tension; the poems are often obscure, and the poet sometimes seems to pay scant attention to such relatively simple things as rhyme and metrical regularity. The overall impression of the verse, as critics like to point out, is as if Michelangelo in writing was struggling to shape his complex thoughts into hard, unmalleable language the way a sculptor struggles with marble or granite.

The poems fall into several categories. First in importance are the pieces written to Vittoria Colonna, either proclaiming Michelangelo's Platonic love for her (he met her when he was sixty-three), or lamenting her death.

Vittoria was herself a poet of some note and a patroness of the arts, and she inspired several notable men of her day to the composition of verse. Generally speaking, there are three levels of love spoken of in Michelangelo's poetry: human, fleshly love, which takes the Petrarchan convention; honest love, a transcendental emotion that takes the neo-Pla-

tonic convention; and good love, the spiritual love of God. Good love is the subject of the greater number of Michelangelo's poems, but honest love is the dominant theme in the best of his love poems, most of which are written to Vittoria. Human love is a theme in these poems too, but as an antagonist to honest love. In a typical poem to Vittoria, for example, the poet describes how honest love has come to him forbidding corrupt desire (human love) and raising him to the level of the spirit. This is a conventional, neo-Platonic theme, yet Michelangelo's energetic expression of it reanimates the convention and produces a remarkable unconventional poetry.

The poems concerning the good love of God are next in importance after the poems to Vittoria. Michelangelo was seriously dedicated to the Christian ideal, and the religious poems are full of his deep, though often agonized love for Christ. Many of them are tortured, self-debasing confessions. Among the most frequent themes in these poems are fear of the judgment day, fear for salvation, the feeling of moral inadequacy, and prayer and supplication.

Tommaso Cavaliere was a young Roman aristocrat to whom Michelangelo was strongly attracted; a significant group of the poems are dedicated to the poet's admiration and love of that youth. He saw in Tommaso a model of elegance and grace, a man with manners and a social style the opposite of that of Michelangelo himself. The main burden of this group is Michelangelo's statement of admiration of the young man, and the poet's offer of friendship.

Michelangelo's overtures were, apparently, coolly received. All in all, these poems speak of a Platonic kind of love very similar to the kind of affection for a young man we are familiar with in Shakespeare's sonnets. Much different are the forty-eight quatrains to Cecchino Bracci, who died at the age of fifteen in 1544. His uncle, Luigi del Riccio, requested of Michelangelo a tomb design

and an epitaph for his nephew. Michelangelo had seen very little of Cecchino, and the moods of the poems represent those of the uncle, not of Michelangelo.

Naturally enough, a group of Michelangelo's poems are concerned with art in general and some of his own works in particular. One interesting piece describes the physical difficulties he endured painting the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Two poems are written as speeches for two of the statues (*Night and Day*) that Michelangelo made for the tomb in Florence of the young Duke Giuliano de' Medici. A number of the poems use metaphoric structures drawn from aspects of the practice of various arts, painting and sculpture in particular. Among these is Michelangelo's perhaps best-known poem, the sonnet "Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto" ("No conception the greatest artist can have"). Written between 1538 and 1544, the first four lines of this Platonic love poem became famous immediately. Within a few years they were known in Spain and elsewhere, and they were translated into French by Phillipe Desportes, the only verses of Michelangelo translated into French before the nineteenth century. In these four lines is condensed Michelangelo's idea of art. They can be roughly paraphrased as follows: "No conception the greatest artist can have is not imprisoned in the rough marble block; to break away the excess stone to reveal it is all the mind-guided hand can do." This idea of sculpture (and by extension the other arts as well) as the achievement by skill of the artist's intellectual conception was not entirely new, but Michelangelo's unique and authoritative expression of it became, and still is, a touchstone for critics of his art.

Another group of poems is concerned with messages to acquaintances, patrons, and friends, and with the pronouncement of opinion, praise, and condemnations. A friend is lectured on ingratitude; Vasari, the great biographer of artists, is praised for his perservation of the reputations of painters; Pope Julius II is angrily de-

nounced; and the deaths of friends and relatives are eloquently regretted. Some of these poems are cautiously political and complain or condemn the actions of powerful contemporaries of the poet. The best-known of this class of poems is Michelangelo's piece put in the mouth of his statue of Night on the Florentine tomb of Duke Giuliano de Medici. Another poet, Giovanni Strozzi, had praised the statue, carved in the shape of a sleeping girl; Strozzi suggests that since she is so much alive in art she be awakened. In reply, Michelangelo condemns the excesses of contemporary Medici politics in his native Florence. (Michelangelo, who to some extent identified himself with Dante in exile, lived in Rome in self-imposed exile.) He has his statue answer that she would rather sleep than endure the vile corruption which she would

witness around her if she were awakened.

The poems that do not fall into any one or more of these major groups cannot be easily classified. Michelangelo wrote in an unsystematic way and, apparently, as the spirit moved him. Many of his poems, for example, have been found jotted down on the back of prints or in the margins of letters or notebooks. It was only in his later years that he wrote consistent groups of poems. Among the unclassified poems are pieces on such various subjects as fire, night, the rustic life, death (he was already writing of his "approaching death" fifty years before he died), cities he had visited, and the manners and morals of his times. Not a few of this last type of poem are satirical burlesques, some full of the earthy language that has always upset censors and self-appointed guardians of public morality.

THE POETRY OF MÖRIKE

Author: Eduard Mörike (1804-1875)

First published: *Poems*, 1838; *Idylle vom Bodensee, oder Fischer Martin und die Glockendiebe*, 1846

Since the Romantic period was, among other things, a revolt against the Age of Reason, it is frequently asserted that the Romantics were sentimental eccentrics. However, Eduard Mörike cannot be classified as such. He was a sensitive dreamer, a skillful poet, but above all a poet of simplicity. A contemporary critic called him "a human being in nightgown and soft slippers." While purists of the Romantic Period will refer to Hölderlin, Mörike was able to appeal to a larger public. Many of his poems became folklore and folksongs during his lifetime. Brahms, Schumann, and Hugo Wolf set some of his poems to music, and most of them are still to be heard in concert halls all over the world. He was a master of classical meters, but he abhorred strict theoretical principles in his work. D. F. Strauss, his famous theologian contemporary, said: "Thanks to his work, nobody can sell us rhetoric for poetry." Describ-

ing the poet's intuitive creativity, he stated that "Mörike takes a handful of earth, squeezes it ever so little, and a little bird flies out."

Mörike made full use of the wealth of inflections which the German language offers. Some critics, however, object to a lack of composition in his poems. Frequently past, present, and future are interwoven without proper sequence. Mörike himself was suspicious of a purely academic approach. In an epigram he replied to his German critics: "You can see in his poems that he can express himself in Latin." He was a representative of the "Schwäbische Dichterschule" (Swabian School) which had formed around the poet Ludwig Uhland. Heinrich Heine, who detested this lack of cosmopolitan ambitions, attacked the school with satirical comments. Mörike always remained a native son, and some of his poems are written in Swabian dia-

lect. He did not leave Swabia except for a few excursions into Bavaria, Tyrol, and Switzerland, and he disregarded the problematic speculations of his time which caused Goethe to examine all aspects of nineteenth century knowledge, and which made Hölderlin seek refuge in the idealistic world of Greece. Goethe tried to explore the unexplorable, while Mörike maintained a childlike vision and radiated in his poems an adoration of life without torturing his mind with a multitude of question marks. This attitude is demonstrated in his most frequently quoted poem "Prayer":

Lord, send what pleaseth Thee!
Let it be weal or woe;
Thy hands give both, and so
Either contenteth me.

But, Lord, whichever
Thou giv'st, pain or pleasure,
O do not drench me!
In sweet mid-measure
Lieth true plenty.

A prose translation of the same poem may serve to illustrate the simple choice of words which could not be employed in a poetical translation:

Lord, send what you will
Love or sorrow
I am happy
That both flows from your hand.

Do not overload me
With joy
Or with sorrow
In the middle lies
Sweet contentment.

Mörike, the seventh child in a family of thirteen, was born in 1804, the son of a medical doctor. A student of theology, he entered the Lower Seminary at Urach and continued his studies at the Higher Seminary. Although he came to dislike theological study, he nevertheless became a pastor in the small Swabian village of Kleversulzbach, chiefly because his mother felt that the ministry was the proper profession for any educated man.

His father had died early, and his mother came from a vicar's family. An attempt in 1828 to establish himself as writer and editor had failed. He admitted feeling "like a tethered goat" when he started his pastoral duties, and he preferred to write poetry instead of sermons. Frequently he had to borrow his Sunday sermons from a colleague. In 1838 he published his first volume under the title *Poems*. His attitude towards his parishioners is described in his poem "A Parson's Experience": "Fortunately my peasants like a 'sharp sermon.' What happens is that on Saturday evening after eleven o'clock they creep into my garden and steal my lettuce and on Sunday in the morning service they expect the vinegar for it. But I make the ending gentle: they get the oil."

After nine years, in 1843, he resigned from his position as pastor for reasons of ill health. But the major reason was his desire to be free from his pastoral duties. His happiest time arrived, when he obtained a position as a professor of literature in a girls' high school. A one-hour teaching assignment each week left sufficient time for writing poetry, and the girls enjoyed being lectured on poetry by a real poet. He even earned an honorary doctor's degree, and the queen attended one of his lectures. His major diversion from his literary work were his delightful drawings, which showed again his ability to create something without strenuous efforts. His drawings, issued as a separate volume, have only recently found a larger audience.

Mörike married in 1851, but his marriage resulted in separation. His close relationship with his sister Klärchen, who lived in the Mörike house, caused many conflicts. Also, in his student days he had had an unpleasant experience with the opposite sex when he fell in love with a beautiful girl who had a doubtful reputation and who failed to remain faithful to him. Five poems with the title "Peregrina" describe his joy and sorrow. The cycle ends:

Could I forsake such beauty? The old
bliss
Returns, and seems yet sweeter than
before.
O come! My arms have waited long for
this.

But at the look she gives my heart
grows sore.
Hatred and love are mingled in her
kiss.
She turns away, and will return no
more.

Another love affair, which resulted in an
engagement, was called off three years
later. Retelling his experience, he again
demonstrated his ability to evoke deep
feelings with simple words:

Fare you well—you could not guess
What a pang the words imparted,
For you spoke with cheerful face,
Going on your way light-hearted.

Fare you well—time and again
Since that day these words I've spoken,
Never weary of the pain,
Though my heart as oft was broken.

In spite of unfortunate love affairs and
an unhappy marriage, he never lost his
serenity, which was based on a sincere
belief in the goodness of his creator and
his place in God's creation. In his most
famous prose piece, "Mozart auf der
Reise nach Prag" ("Mozart on a Voyage
to Prague"), he inserted a poem, usually
titled "O Soul, Remember," which indi-
cates his sense of tranquillity while speak-
ing about the ever present reality of
death:

A sapling springs, who knows
Where, in the forest;
A rosebush, who can say
Within what garden?
Chosen already both—
O soul, remember—
To root upon your grave
And to grow there.

Like most Romantics Mörike used na-
ture as his major source of inspiration.
When he was a curate, he was found
resting in the grass of the churchyard

while the honor of the Sunday sermon
was given to young assistants. Restful
poems like "Withdrawal" were the result
of such leisure:

Let me go, world, let me go!
Come no more with gifts to woo me!
Leave this heart of mine, now, to me,
With its joy and with its woe!

In his adoration of nature he also re-
frained from the emotional eccentricities
which can be noted in the work of his
contemporaries. He described his impres-
sions in simple rhymes, which found
their way into numerous poetry collec-
tions, children's books, and school books,
"September Morning" falls in this cate-
gory:

The world's at rest still, sun not
through,
Forest and field lie dreaming:
But soon now, when the veil drops, you
Will see the sky's unmisted blue;
Lusty with autumn and subdued,
The world in warm gold swimming.

Many love poems, free from affecta-
tions, also flowed easily from his pen.
"Question and Answer" is typical:

Whence, you ask me, did the demon
Love gain entrance to my heart?
Why was not long since his venom
Wrenched out boldly with the dart?

Mörike's poems are not a product of
tense creative efforts by candlelight in a
poet's attic (a setting used by most ro-
mantic painters of the era to depict
poets). In all of his poems the element of
spontaneity is apparent. Nothing sounds
labored or contrived. One of his poems,
written in bed on a morning, is "The
Sisters," now a well-known Brahms duet.
A popular love poem "Fair Rohtraut" was
started when he saw the name in a dic-
tionary:

Then they rode home without a word,
Rohtraut, Fair Rohtraut;
The lad's heart sang though he made
no sound:
If you were queen and today were
crowned,

It would not grieve me!
You thousand leaves of the forest wist
That I Fair Rohtraut's mouth have
kissed!
—Quiet, quiet, my heart!

It is not surprising that his deep love of nature and his childlike purity of imagination made him also an outstanding teller of fairy tales and a writer of ballads. The mythical world of ghosts and elves comes alive in the "Song of the Elves" and "The Ghosts at Mummelsee."

In spite of his marriage to a Roman Catholic, he never showed an inclination to become a member of any church after he left his pastoral assignment. He was under the influence of his friend D. F. Strauss, who wrote the most unorthodox biography of Jesus of this time. That Mörike admired the ritual of the Catholic Church is evident, however, in his poem "Holy Week."

Following his separation from his wife

in 1873, he lived in several places and at spas, residence made possible by financial help from his friends. He died in 1875, and on his deathbed he was reconciled with his wife.

The simplicity of Mörike's poems made many of them popular during his lifetime, yet at the same time this quality prevented proper recognition of his art by many of his fellow Romantics. But in spite of his unsophisticated writings no critic ever accused him of being trivial. If the test of time is considered the most valid criteria for a poet's work, Mörike easily has passed the test, and he will most probably remain a popular poet for generations to come. Gottfried Keller, a contemporary Swiss poet and novelist, said after his death: "He died like the departure of a quiet mountain spirit . . . like a beautiful day in June. If his death does not bring him closer to the people—it is only the people's fault."

THE POETRY OF MOSCHUS

Author: Moschus (fl. c.150 B.C.)

First transcribed: c.150 B.C.

There is virtually no real biographical evidence about the lyric poet Moschus. Suidas, the lexicographer who lived in the tenth century, and a note appended to the poem of Moschus called "Love in Flight" provide the only sources of information available. For what they are worth, these sources assert that Moschus was born at Syracuse and was a student of the grammarian Aristarchus, who taught at Alexandria from about 180 to about 144 B.C. The year 150 would possibly be about the middle of the life of Moschus.

Moschus is considered the chronological, if not the stylistic, successor to the Greek bucolic poet, Theocritus, and it is a commonplace to say that he is a pastoral poet like Theocritus. The texts of the poems of Moschus, however, do not actually support such an assertion. The pastoral poets assumed the mask of shep-

herds, or in Greek *pastors*, and in the guise of simple country folk they sang of love and death in a highly stylized and conventional manner. The reputation of Moschus as a Greek poet rests on three poems, "Love in Flight," "Europa," and "Lament for Bion." The other poems attributed to him are fragments surviving as quotations in other works and are of little consequence. These poems, in general, follow the pastoral conventions much less than most critics assume.

The "Lament for Bion" is the closest to Theocritus in manner of all the works by Moschus, but it is agreed by the best authorities that it is not really by Moschus, although traditionally attributed to him. The work was probably written by a student of Bion in imitation of his master's "Lament for Adonis." "Lament for Bion" is an elegy, a song of mourning, for the poet Bion who, as the poem asserts, had

drunk poison. The poem has a refrain, "Keen, Sicilian women, keen the cry of grief for him, mourn melodic maidens." This recurring line sets off sections of the poem. The subjects treated in each section are as follows: 1. The poet announces the death of the beautiful musician and calls on the woods, rivers, orchards, and flowers to weep for him. 2. The nightingales are told to tell the Muses that Bion is dead and with him dies all music. 3. Wild swans are called to sing the swan song for Bion. 4. The flocks and herds lack the comforting presence of their shepherd Bion. 5. The gods weep for Bion and all nature droops. The flowers wilt; the flocks give no more milk; bees gather no more honey. 6. Never has such a grief found so vocal expression not even in the old stories and ancient myths. 7. Nightingales and swallows sing in sad choirs the requiem. 8. Who will be able to make music now that Bion is dead? 9. Galatea weeps for her dead lover Bion. 10. Bion compared to Homer is the second greatest loss to the joy of the earth. 11. All cities weep for Bion. 12. As the greenery of the earth is renewed in springtime, so death is part of the natural cycle of nature. 13. Yet, Bion drank poison and died unnaturally. 14. Justice will be done. Moschus would descend to Hell to retrieve the soul of Bion if he could do so. There Bion will sing a Sicilian song to Persephone, the sad Queen of Hell who was carried from her flowering fields in Sicily by the God of the underworld.

"Europa" deals with the story of the Phoenician princess in Greek mythology who was carried off to Crete by Zeus in the form of a bull and who bore Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Sarpedon there. This story, however, is only the vehicle for two extended digressions. First, Europa dreams at some length of the contest of Asia and Europe to possess her. The struggle described is a contest between two women. Second, when Europa awakens, she goes out to gather flowers and her flower basket with cleverly contrived pictures is described in great detail. These pictures, like the struggle between the two women, have an allegorical significance. Zeus looking down at the girl gathering flowers becomes enamoured and changes his shape to that of a bull. He induces her to climb on his back and swims across the sea to Crete with her.

"Love in Flight" is a charming erotic poem in which Cypris, the goddess of love, has lost her mischievous little boy Love, or Cupid. She offers a kiss to anyone who can tell her news of her boy and offers much more to anyone who can catch him and return him to her. Her description of Cupid is of great interest as a reflection of the poet's attitude toward erotic love. Cupid is physically beautiful and talks well, but he tells lies and is cruel and wily. His kiss is a sick kiss and his lips are poison. His arrows are tipped with fire. In short, although intensely desirable, love is represented as dangerous and hectic.

THE POETRY OF MUSSET

Author: Alfred de Musset (1810-1857)

First published: *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*, 1829 (*Romances of Spain and Italy*); *Poésies diverses*, 1831; *Le Spectacle dans un fauteuil*, 1833 (*A Show from an Easy Chair*); *Poésies nouvelles*, 1840 (*New Poems*)

In 1852, the whole body of Alfred de Musset's poetry was gathered into two volumes and published as the *First Poems* and *New Poems*. The first volume is made up of *Romances of Spain and Italy* and *A Show from an Easy Chair*. The

second collection contains pieces written after 1833. It is worth recalling that by 1840, when the poet was thirty years old, Musset's creative talents were virtually exhausted. A complete explanation of this premature exhaustion should not be

sought in the character of Musset's poetic doctrine. However, in the light of Musset's stated belief that the greatness of verse was commensurate with the magnitude of the poet's suffering, the intensity of his emotion, it will be readily understood that his creative talent was likely to fade relatively early.

Only a handful of people turned up for Musset's funeral in 1857. This seems remarkable now, in the light of Musset's continuing popular appeal both as poet and dramatist. It is all the more remarkable in view of the enthusiastic welcome given him by the members of the Romantic *Cénacle* when he first joined the group in 1828. His precocious poetic talent and dazzling wit could not, and did not, fail to impress its members.

Romances of Spain and Italy was written after the first collected works of Victor Hugo had become available. Just as it is of little moment that Victor Hugo's *Poems of the Orient* was inspired by his watching the sun set over Paris, so it matters little that when Musset's collection first appeared, he was not familiar with either Spain or Italy. The brightness and color of these countries, remembered or imagined, appealed to the young Romantics seeking a vivid contrast with the drabness of France in their day; a rich backcloth in front of which intense passion could be appropriately represented.

The poems for which Musset is best known are the series of four "Nights": "The Night of May," "The Night of December," "The Night of August," and "The Night of October." All four relate directly to his turbulent, unhappy love affair with the novelist George Sand. Although it is easy to exaggerate the effect of this liaison on Musset, it does seem certain that he was deeply marked by it and that subsequent affairs even served to remind him of it.

The four "Nights" contain some of the finest lyrical passages that may be found in French verse. They take the dramatic form of dialogues between the poet and his Muse, with the latter acting as a con-

fidante who listens, advises, and consoles.

In "The Night of May," the Spring Muse vainly begs the poet to give form to his suffering in a work of art; by so doing, he will be participating in the rites of creation and eternal renewal taking place around him. At first, the poet thinks he is only imagining the voice of the Muse, but little by little it grows louder and more urgent, and he clearly makes out her words:

Poet, take thy lute. . . .

The Muse despairs of banishing the poet's indolence, after insisting however that his very unhappiness would have been a guarantee of the beauty of his verse:

The most desperate songs are the most beautiful;

I know some immortal ones that are pure sobs.

The poet breaks his silence to claim that the weight of his grief is such that no form of expression could bear it:

But I have suffered a hard martyrdom

And the least I might say about it,

Were I to try it on my lute,

Would break it like a reed . . .

"The Night of December" presents, beside the poet, a mysterious companion who follows him through all the stages of his life. This brother reveals himself to be the image of loneliness. In "The Night of August" a happier note is struck, the work involves a hymn of praise to the forces of life that allow man to recover from the setbacks in life. However, "The Night of October" contains a return to anguish for the poet. He knows once more wrath and despair; he realizes that he has not in fact recovered from his unhappy love affair.

In his series of "Nights," Musset seems to have moved away from the mainstream of the nineteenth century Romantic movement. Yet in doing so, he renews contact with some of the resources of Romanticism in its ageless aspects. For here

the poet places himself at the center of his poetic meditation and, in representing himself sincerely, as directly as possible, admits the reader to a position of privileged intimacy. The reader feels in sympathy with the poet. Musset's sincere, lyrical laying bare of the emotions in the form of confidential poetry was to be imitated frequently in the course of the nineteenth century.

The emotion which recurs with most frequency in Musset's verse is love. His love is in turn generally associated with suffering and a form of regret. A partial explanation of Musset's considerable popularity may doubtless be sought in the lucidity with which he was able to analyze his sufferings and their causes. It is this lucidity and the regret which it provokes that make Musset's unhappiness especially poignant. One of the most moving illustrations of this sincere self-analysis, from which all trace of oratory or rhetoric is excluded, may be found in the short piece entitled "Sadness." This sonnet, collected in the *New Poems* of 1852, was written in June, 1840. It is a confession of failure in life: a loss of pride, a wasting of energy and a sense of shame about the whole situation:

I have wasted my strength and my life,
I have lost my friends, my gaiety;
I have even lost my pride
Which gave confidence in my genius.

The simplicity of the language, its power to suggest the repentance of the sinner, remind the reader of similar confessions by François Villon four hundred years earlier.

In Musset, the dramatist often co-exists with the poet, and it is difficult to separate the two. This is readily evident in the dramatic dialogue employed in the "Nights." Regrettably, it also shows up in oratorical aspects of parts of these poems. The double role of poet and dramatist seems part of a greater dualism and even dichotomy in Musset. On the one hand he was truly a child of his century, containing within himself many of its con-

traditions, much of its anguish. On the other, he was an admirer of the great French classics, too aware of the tradition of French letters ever to subscribe completely to the doctrines of the Romantic *Cénacle*. Some of the distrust with which he came to be viewed by members of the group may be explained by his mischievously parodying some of their excesses. If it is valid to talk of Musset as a poet aiming at a free transfer of emotion from himself to his reader, it is also necessary to remark that irony and whimsical, critical detachment are also components of Musset's poetic repertory.

"A Wasted Evening"—a poem about an evening at the theater—is one of Musset's finest poems. It has the tone of a conversation. Whereas in other pieces by Musset one might regret the absence of those elements of density and surprise which are often held to be essential to a poem, here they are much in evidence. The poem is related to a precise circumstance in his life: a performance of Molière's *The Misanthropist* in Paris in 1840. Musset proceeds from an ironic, effective treatment of current tastes in the theater:

I was alone, the other evening, at the
Théâtre-Français,
Or almost alone; the author had but lit-
tle success.
Of course, it was just Molière: . . .

Then, in masterly fashion, he weaves in a new theme: the glimpse of a girl in the theater brings to mind a phrase from the poet André Chénier. This is enough to distract the poet from the task he had set himself: to rehabilitate, and imitate the talent of the seventeenth century dramatist. Musset succeeds admirably here in calling to life an atmosphere, and in making a concise, critical commentary on the tastes of men of his day. Moreover, he shows up strikingly the problem of his personal, artistic indolence.

That flippancy and irony were a studied technique becomes obvious in a piece such as "Upon Three Steps of Marble," a

poem composed in 1849. The title refers to the stairs of the terrace of the *Orange-rie* at Versailles. The beginning of the poem is a disrespectful description of the palace and park of Versailles:

I do not believe that there is on earth a
place

More described, more lauded, more
sung
Than the boring park of Versailles.

The flippant beginning, with its implicit criticism of descriptive poetry, gives way however to a magnificent evocation of the century of Louis XIV, with which Musset patently feels considerable spiritual affinity.

When Musset's name is mentioned, regret is often expressed. It is felt by many readers that with a more sustained

effort, he could have accomplished far more than he did, that his life of dissipation must be deplored. Some have the impression that in his emotional development Musset never did seem to move far beyond adolescence. The poet himself hints at this possibility in an address to the reader in the *First Poems*:

My first poems are those of a child
The second of an adolescent
The last scarcely of a man.

Even if this is true, and it seems possible, it is to be remembered that Musset is in good company. It could perhaps be shown that many great poets, although they did not write during their actual adolescence, frequently referred back to it, consciously or unconsciously, as their primary source of inspiration.

THE POETRY OF NEKRASOV

Author: Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-1878)

Principal published works: *Dreams and Sounds*, 1840; "Vlas," 1856; *The Pedler*, 1861; *The Red-Nosed Frost*, 1863; "Russian Women," 1871-1872; *Who Can be Happy and Free in Russia?* 1873-1876; *Last Songs*, 1877

The second half of the nineteenth century produced two outstanding Russian poets who were, however, almost direct opposites. Afanasi Shenshin, better known as Fet, represented the art for art's sake school in his lucid, subjective lyrics. His antagonist was Nikolai Nekrasov, a remarkable, enterprising, and often contradictory man who wrote realistic "civic" poems.

At seventeen Nekrasov was disowned by his wealthy father. Alone in St. Petersburg, the youth was forced to take up hack-writing in order to sustain himself. During this time he wrote a great many rhymed *feuilletons* and acquired a facility for turning out mediocre verse which, unfortunately, he never lost, even in his later serious work. His first collection of poems, *Dreams and Sounds*, appeared in 1840. It was a complete failure and was ruthlessly criticized by Vissarion Belin-

sky, the foremost literary critic of nineteenth century Russia. Determined to be a success, Nekrasov entered the publishing field and in 1846 bought *The Contemporary*, which, under his editorship, became the outstanding literary journal in Russia.

Nekrasov has rightfully been called a genius as an editor and publisher. He had the ability to get the best writers as contributors and had himself a keen eye for good verse. *The Contemporary* published works by Dostoevski, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. Encouraged by his financial success, Nekrasov again began to write poetry. After many sentimental and prosaic excesses, he succeeded in creating original standards for his work. He deliberately aimed at realistic, rhetorical verse that did not follow traditional aesthetic paths or the Pushkin tradition of which Fet was an heir. Unfortunately, Nekrasov did not

have the same skill in judging his own work as he had in judging that of others, and it is only when he abandoned traditional meters altogether and wrote in a folk-song style that his poems achieved a successful, vigorous, and highly original character.

In content, too, Nekrasov broke with the traditionalists. While Fet followed the Romantic school, Nekrasov strongly adhered to Naturalism as Belinsky had formulated it. Belinsky advocated a fidelity to life in literature, a representation of the "inner and outer truth" of Russian life as well as a devotion to positive social tendencies. In other words, literature should be both a protest against social injustices and a compassionate portrayal of the Russian masses. Nekrasov's poems fitted this formula well. His favorite subject was the suffering and misery of the Russian peasantry. In 1856, Nekrasov published a long narrative poem, "Vlas," which tells how a rich peasant suffered a vision of hell, repented his former sins, greed, and miserliness, and became an ascetic. This poem, obvious moral and all, closely resembles a sermon. Later, Nekrasov turned from this kind of moralizing to a more arresting description of the peasantry and at the same time gave his verses a tone of irony that saved them from sentimentality.

In 1866 publication of *The Contemporary* had been suspended. With the aid of Saltykov-Shchedrin and Mikhailovsky, Nekrasov then began to edit *The Fatherland's Annals*, which he had acquired. Under these three the periodical became the leading instrument of the "populist" trend of thought.

Nekrasov's 1863 narrative poem, *The Red-Nosed Frost*, describes, almost as in a fairy tale, the beauties of the Russian winter and presented an idealized picture of the peasant woman. Darya, a young widow who has just returned from her husband's burial. The cottage is cold and so she goes out to gather wood to build a fire that will keep her children warm. While she collects logs for the fire King

Frost sees her and causes her to fall asleep. As she freezes to death she remembers her happy marriage and her two children, working together with her family in the fields. The poem is beautiful and passionate, deep in feeling and pathos. In another poem, "Russian Women," the sufferings of women are again depicted as two wives follow their husbands into exile in Siberia. *The Pedlar*, written in 1861, is a series of poems about two traveling peasants who sell cloth in the countryside. Their initial adventures, jokes, and tales are followed by "Song of a Poor Pilgrim," which begins "I pass through the meadows, the wind in the meadows is moaning; I am cold, pilgrim, I am cold. I am cold, dear one, I am cold. I pass through the forest, the beasts in the forest are howling: We are hungry, pilgrim, we are hungry! Hungry, dear one, hungry." The tone of foreboding and hopelessness in this lamenting repetition prepares the reader for the tragic end of the poem when the peasants are robbed and murdered in the forest. In this poem Nekrasov approximated the spirit of Russian folk song so closely that the opening lines were later included in an actual song of the people.

In many of his poems Nekrasov used dactylic endings, which were typical of the *byliny*, the oral heroic poems of medieval Russia. He introduced unpoetic peasant words and at times used an almost journalistic style. Nekrasov's most famous short lyric is "Whether I am driving down a dark street at night." The story of a starving couple unable to buy a coffin for their dead child, it is told in intense, direct style. The mother has no alternative but to go out into the streets to earn money for the coffin. The poem ends with the thought: "All without exception will call you by a terrible name. Only within me will curses stir and die away to no purpose."

The extremes of poverty and misery especially attracted Nekrasov. In his epic work *Who Can be Happy and Free in Russia?* the theme is also that of peasant

suffering. The poem attempts to give a picture of all Russia after the abolition of serfdom in 1861. The theme is presented as a folk tale. Seven peasants meet and argue over who they think is happy and free in Russia. Eventually they come to blows. They capture a small bird. Seeking freedom, the bird offers them a magic napkin. Agreeing to take the ransom gift, the peasants are delighted with it and proceed to put it to use. When they see the wonders it offers, they decide to follow the commandments of God and to settle their arguments with reason and honor. They then decide that they will not return home until they have discovered who is happy and free in Russia. They meet all types of people during their search. One of the common people, Grisha, dreams that the future holds freedom and happiness for all the people of Russia. This poem has none of the subjective lamentations of *The Pedlar*. The style is vigorous and expressive, the tone good-humored and sometimes satirical. The work shows Nekrasov at his best, and the critic D. S. Mirsky has called it one of the most original works in Russian poetry of the nineteenth century.

Nekrasov's place in Russian literature has been repeatedly reassessed. During

his lifetime he was often criticized for his private conduct, and it is true that his personal life was strangely in contrast to the ideas he expressed in his poems. He spent his large income on lavish dinners, mistresses, and entertainment. His name was linked with many scandals, and he was known as an unscrupulous businessman. Nevertheless the radicals of the day praised him for the compassion for the peasantry he displayed in his poems.

In 1878, at Nekrasov's funeral, Dostoevski said that Nekrasov deserved the third place in Russian literature, close to Pushkin and Lermontov. The crowd responded with the cry, "Higher, higher." In contrast, critics of the aesthetic school scorned Nekrasov's poetry. Today a middle ground has been reached, and he is recognized as a highly original and expressive poet. By creating his own standards Nekrasov opened new possibilities for poetry. At the same time, using folksong techniques, he brought his verse closer to the people, so that his readers were not limited to the intelligentsia. The Symbolists of the early twentieth century, especially Blok and Bely, paid Nekrasov a lasting tribute when they openly imitated his attempts to make poetry out of the prose of life.

THE POETRY OF NERUDA

Author: Pablo Neruda (1904-)

Principal published works: *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*, 1924; *Tentativa del hombre infinito*, 1926; *Residencia en la Tierra*, I, 1933; *Residencia en la Tierra*, II, 1935; *Un Canto para Bolívar*, 1941; *Tercera Residencia*, 1935-1945, 1947; *Canto General*, 1950; *Odas Elementales*, 1954; *Nuevas Odas Elementales*, 1955; *Obras Completas*, 1957

Reading Pablo Neruda's poetry requires patience, tolerance, and high spirit. Very few of the contemporary Spanish-speaking writers have created so much, so incoherently and so poetically, as this Chilean poet. Before his achievement an attitude of indifference or complete adherence becomes almost impossible. Criticism must also take into account the radicalism of his Communist ideology and the resulting controversial opinions

of his readers. A literary analysis of his poetry must put aside these perspectives in order to obtain a serene and objective appreciation of his work.

Neruda's poetry is characterized by language and attitudes as visceral as those of D. H. Lawrence. Most of the time his poetry springs tumultuously in a feverish mood, expressing his eroticism, melancholy, anxiety, and protest.

From the very beginning, in his youth-

ful work, he expresses his romantic vein in the limpid, sad lines of *Crepusculario* (*Poems of the Twilight*).

At the same time, while love and beauty are sharpened by erotic desire, the poet tries to avoid them.

Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada (*Twenty Poems of Love and a Desperate Song*) inaugurates, as the title itself implies, the torture of love. Between the poet and the loved woman there is only distance and bitterness. It does not matter whether love has joy in itself; sooner or later anguish crosses the heart as a tempest and whirlwind. To heal his wounds the poet would prefer to escape from everything that would tend to hold him where he is. Since he has found only disaster in woman, it is time to fly away. In "A Desperate Song" he feels his heart broken, rotten, converted into a pit that is bitter and open to the trash of the world.

A milestone in Neruda's poetry is his *Residencias*, three books published successively in 1933, 1935, and 1947. The first two books have as title *Residencia en la Tierra*, I and II (*Residence on Earth*); the last of the series is *Tercera Residencia* (*Third Residence*). In these he adheres to surrealism and a philosophical attitude pervades the poems. Subjected to vital experiences, in a world of constant changes, he views everything in a state of disintegration: men, love, stars, waves, life. Everything belongs to the drama of the river that is constant and yet ever changing. The poet's sense of disintegration appears everywhere in these books, in which he abandons logic and syntax as a formal consequence of his inner attitude. The result is a message of disintegration through disintegrated ideas, sentences, and words. It is hard to find a single line in these books in which there is no violence.

In the first book of *Residencias*, this process of disintegration is the scenery in which the poet contemplates perpetual decadence. The only possible ways of escaping from this cosmic cataclysm are

love and poetry, though time is always and stubbornly corroding all around it. His lack of faith in something, his feelings of guilt with no possible redemption, emphasizes his anxiety.

"Arte Poética" ("Poetic Art"), one of the most hermetic and at the same time most revealing poems of this book, exemplifies those ideas. The corporal senses establish a relationship with everything that surrounds him as he locates himself among shadows and space. But suddenly there appears, as a true escape, his desire of poetizing and loving, of expressing his prophetic voice and his melancholy, and of answering to a universal call from things that question in a confused and constant manner.

The joy of love and poetry, however, is melted by time and matter. The poet is surrounded by one single thing and one single movement.

As this title suggests, Neruda shares in a semi-pantheistic conception, but with no religious implication, the same destiny of the cosmos. He is not a thing, but the universe is limiting him, restraining his ideals, paralyzing his restlessness. Paradoxically he feels both the companionship and enmity of the universe.

His symbols, with no coherent meaning but expressing his personal vision are rich: *bee, sword, fire, grape, ant, butterfly, dove, fish, salt, and rose* are common and meaningful words in Neruda's poetry. Under these symbols hide love, vitality, joy, hostility, negation, dream, fugacity, erotism, plurality—words that include a very personal perspective.

His second *Residencias* possesses a more mature expression within the stream of super-realism. His contact with the Spanish poets who had adopted a visionary attitude orients his production. In these poems he achieves evasion from reality through dreams, subconsciousness, and illogical reasoning. Disintegration and its consequent anguish keep pervading his poems, but he is no more a mere spectator of decadence; he is a human, anguished, and abhors his human quality.

The worship of "ugliness," a trait of super-realism, imposes upon Neruda the use of words, sentences, and stanzas of incoherent and strange effects. But his apparent absurdities in his poetry have an intention. Since the world is for the poet a planet filled with useless, worn things, he chooses some of them to express his nausea, his feeling of futility toward all types of being.

The third *Residencia* begins with a series of poems of the same trend as those included in the second volume. But from the seventh, "The furies and sorrows," written in 1934, Neruda declares that the world and his poetry have changed, as he indicates in the lines preceding the poem.

With these poems his work takes a radical turn. Until now Neruda had been the poet of egotism, solitude, disintegration, and anguish. The Communist ideology now appears in his verse and he writes political poems, full of vigor and fury.

The Spanish Civil War and World War II influenced this transformation. Neruda even ridicules his concern with his earlier themes. "Spain in my heart," one of the poems of this book, presents his new attitude: he curses wealthy Spanish people because they are responsible for the poverty of the country, blasphemes against God, attacks tradition because of its sterility, condoles with Madrid stormed by Franco's soldiers, and justifies his hatred of tyrannic suppression. He praises the Republican soldiers' mothers, remembers with affection many small Spanish towns, evokes the arrival of the International Brigade, condemns Franco and his generals, wails over the destruction of Madrid, and finishes his tempestuous lines with an ode to the People's Army, hope of salvation for the country.

His poems about Stalingrad, in the period of World War II, also have political and social themes; the tone of indignation is now directed against German soldiers, and praise is given to the Russians. His lines become less hermetic;

they are more open and direct. More concerned with ideas and feelings, Neruda puts aside his old poetic techniques and stylistic resources. "New Song of Love to Stalingrad" is explanatory of his "public" poetry of the period.

Canto General (*General Song*) is one of the most ambitious book of poems ever written in Spanish. It is a work inspired by Neruda's political ideas and his personal interpretation of Spanish-American history. A nationalist attitude echoes through many of the poems, for Chile is very often at the center of Neruda's emotion and thought. We can find some antecedents of these poems on the attitude and production of Andrés Bello, Rubén Darío, and Leopoldo Lugones, who strove through different poetic works to exalt and praise the Spanish-American continent. But no one of them reached the span and influence of Neruda's *Canto General*.

The book is divided into fifteen cantos of unequal length and value. Among lines of great lyric beauty appear also some filled with prosaic expression. Some of the positive features of the book are its almost constant strength, its vast knowledge of Spanish-American history, geography, and flora, and its wide variety of meters, forms and measures of the poems. In the last of the cantos, the poet states the sources and intention of his book.

"Amor América" ("America, My Love") stands first in the book. It is a beautiful poem of praise to the continent before the arrival of the Spaniards: the Indians were tender and bloody, owners of the land until blood was spilled and a lamp was extinguished. This initial lyric introduces a series of poems presenting an ecumenical parade of themes and tones. "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" ("Heights of Macchu Picchu"), the fortress city of the Incas, perched high between two mountain peaks, gives Neruda an opportunity for a poem of great chromatic effect.

"Canto General de Chile" ("General Song to Chile") is another poem of imag-

inative and descriptive strength. Geography, geological disasters, towns, people, and plants are shown amidst a stream of powerful metaphors. Neruda's absence from his country, exile imposed because of his ideology, exacerbates his patriotic feelings, and upon his return he made this feeling clear in "Hymn and Return."

The last series of the poems, *Yo soy (I Am)*, is a poetic autobiography. Neruda sings to his native place and early childhood, tells his stay in Santiago, his overseas adventures, his dramatic stay in Spain, his pleasant sojourn in Mexico, a country he prefers. He closes this book with his last will, proclaiming his faith in Communism and asserting his freedom.

Neruda's last works, *Odas Elementales (Elementary Odes)*, *Nuevas Odas Elementales (New Elementary Odes)*, and *Tercer Libro de las Odas (Third Book of the Odes)*, are composed of poems written in hendecasyllable and heptasyllable lines; in them a new poetic turn appears. Now simple themes and common things are present, often with the result that the poetry becomes platitudinous and poor.

"Oda a la alcachofa" ("Ode to the Artichoke"), "Oda al caldillo de congrio" ("Ode to the Conger Eel Broth") are some titles that speak for themselves. At the same time, however, the poet displays a greater love for nature. In "Ode to the Rose" a tone of tranquillity sharply contrasts with his former protest and violence.

Neruda's poetry, despite its hermetism and obliquity of ideology, is valid testimony of a rebel, an anguished, impotent man of our times. His poetry is hard to understand, too long to be pleasantly read, too slanted to be ideologically shared. But its darkness and rage correspond to the expression of the oniric realm, to the telluric forces of nature, to the instincts, frustrations, and pessimism that corrodes the modern world. He projects into our time that poetic stream, vital and furious, of the poets *maudits* of last century, who revolted against everything and everybody, including themselves, and created a pre-existentialist current of desperation, the mood of many writers in this century.

THE POETRY OF NERVAL

Author: Gérard de Nerval (Gérard Labrunie, 1808-1855)

Principal published works: *Odelettes*, 1852; *Les chimères*, 1854; *Poésies*, 1924

No poet of the French Romantic group has a more ardent public today than Gérard de Nerval, whose haunting poetic visions have influenced poets from Baudelaire to the Surrealists. Yet his visionary powers also brought him poverty, madness and repeated failure in love, and finally led him to take his own life. Numbering scarcely more than fifty, his poems remain more strangely suggestive than any other writing of the period and reveal a true poet's sense of the secret sources of lyricism. The finest of them carry this lyricism into a world of illusions and shifting forms, where "dream overflows into real life."

Setting aside his earliest poems, Nerval

grouped the others under three different headings: the *Odelettes*, short lyric pieces; the poems composed specifically to be set to music, *Lyricism and Operatic Lyrics (Lyrisme et vers d'opéra)*; and finally, separate from the others, the twelve sonnets (plus nine published long after his death) of *Les chimères (Chimerae, or Visions)*. He also made collections of the folk songs, poems, and legends of his native Valois and some remarkable translations of the German mystical and Romantic poets, including Heine and Richter. His rendering of *Faust* (Parts I and II), a scrupulously careful, yet eminently poetic text which remains the standard French version of Goethe's great

poem, earned high praise from the author. Alone among the French poets of his generation, Nerval felt a spiritual kinship with the metaphysical orientation of the German poetic tradition. From the fantastic, hallucinatory tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann he learned what fragile boundaries separate the realms of poetry, dream, and external reality—the central discovery of his life.

Characteristic of all his work is a perfect technical control. The directness of German and folk poetry taught him to avoid the pretentiousness and bombast which mar the work of so many of his more famous contemporaries. From the lightest song to the densest sonnet, meter and rhyme sustain the poetic movement, seconding and enhancing its suggestions. The lyrics achieve that rare feat of retaining their charm in the absence of the musical setting for which they were created. Even his prose expresses delicate nuances of perception with a musicality in which not a word is wasted.

The *Odelettes* are vibrant with the same sort of limpid enchantment. Avoiding the pompous rhetoric, didactic tendencies, and factitious allegory inherited by his contemporaries from the eighteenth century, Nerval looked back for his models to the greatest period of pure lyrical expression in French literature, the Renaissance of Ronsard. In this collection the exuberant rhymes of a bacchic song such as "Gaieté" stand beside shimmering, whispered evocations of the natural world "In the Woods" ("Dans les bois") or in early springtime ("Avril"):

Déjà les beaux jours, la poussière,
Un ciel d'azur et de lumière,
Les murs enflammés, les longs soirs;
Et rien de vert: à peine encore
Un reflet rougeâtre décore
Les grands arbres aux rameaux noirs!

Ce beau temps me pèse et m'ennuie.
Ce n'est qu'après des jours de pluie
Que doit surgir, en un tableau,
Le printemps verdissant et rose,
Comme une nymphe fraîche éclore,
Qui, souriante, sort de l'eau.

(Already there are fine days and dust,
Already a blazing, azure sky,
The walls are on fire, the evenings
lengthening,
And nothing green; barely visible yet,
A reddish reflection decorates
The towering trees with their black
branches!)

This fine weather weighs me down and
wearies me.

It is only after rainy days
That spring should surge up,
A picture going green and rose-colored,
Brought out like a new nymph
Who steps from the water, smiling.)

A lament for lost loves—"Les Cydalises"—follows a sensitive, half-mocking rumination on "Butterflies," hovering flowers which "pass like a thought/of poetry or of love." Whatever the subject of the approach, the result is a gem of pure lyrical expression. Where his contemporaries posture and declaim, Nerval simply sings.

Some of his fundamental preoccupations appear in the *Odelettes* free from the obscurity and cypher-like transmutations of *Les chimères*. Long before Marcel Proust, he asserted the superiority of affective memory over immediate experience. "It is now three years since my grandmother died," he says in "La grand'mère":

Depuis trois ans, part le temps prenant
force,
Ainsi qu'un nom gravé dans une écorce,
Son souvenir se creuse plus avant!

(For three years now, taking strength
from time,
Like a name engraved in the bark of a
tree,
Her memory sinks more deeply into
me.)

The poet had a sense of very real participation in the past, not only his own, but that of his race, and even the occult, mythical past of the ancient Eastern-Mediterranean peoples. In "Fantasy" he is transported to the early seventeenth century:

Il est un air pour qui je donnerais
 Tout Rossini, tout Mozart et tout
 Weber
 Un air très-vieux, languissant et funèbre,
 Qui pour moi seul a des charmes secrets.

Or, chaque fois que je viens à l'entendre,
 De deux cents ans mon âme rajeunit:
 C'est sous Louis treize . . . Et je crois
 voir s'étendre
 Un coteau vert que le couchant jaunit,
 Puis un château de brique à coins de
 pierre,
 Aux vitraux teints de rougeâtres couleurs,
 Ceint de grands parcs, avec une rivière
 Baignant ses pieds, qui coule entre des
 fleurs.

Puis une dame, à sa haute fenêtre,
 Blonde aux yeux noirs, en ses habits
 anciens . . .
 Que, dans une autre existence peut-être,
 J'ai déjà vue!—et dont je me souviens!

(There is a melody for which I would
 surrender
 All Rossini, all Mozart, all Weber,
 An ancient, languorous, funereal tune,
 With hidden charms for me alone.

And every time I hear that air,
 Suddenly I grow two centuries younger.
 I live in the reign of Louis the Thirteenth . . . and see stretched out
 A green slope yellowed by the sunset,

Then a brick castle with stone corners,
 Its panes of glass stained by ruddy
 colors,
 Encircled with great parks, and a river
 Bathing its feet, flowing between flowers.

Then I see a fair-haired, dark-eyed lady
 In old-fashioned costume, at a tall window,
 Whom perhaps I have already seen
 somewhere
 In another life . . . and whom I remember!

Many of these poems were written before
 Nerval's encounter with the actress Jenny

Colon, who, after her death at twenty-five, came to incarnate in his imagination the feminine ideal. Only one, the often anthologized "Une allée du Luxembourg" ("A Lane in the Luxembourg Gardens"), suggests his constant search for the Beloved Woman "who, coming into [his] profound night/would light it with a single glance,"

Qui venant dans ma nuit profonde
 D'un seul regard l'éclaircirait!

Here the unknown girl is as yet only a passing ray of light ("doux rayon qui m'as lui").

In spite of the variety of forms taken by the *Odelettes*, there is not a sonnet among them. Nerval reserved this lyric form for his most intense, anguished and difficult works, *Les chimères*, composed in a state of "supernaturalistic revery." In such a state, said his friend Theophile Gautier, "the soul becomes aware of invisible relationships, of previously unnoticed coincidences." To express his discoveries, Nerval invented a cypher-like poetic language. So unlike anything being written at the time were the *Chimerae* that recognition of their mysterious beauty has come only recently, the result in part of the Surrealists' explorations of the subconscious. If Nerval's more lyrical poems sing to an Orphic lyre, these sonnets chant in the haunting semi-tones of Eastern mysticism. Insisting on their basically incantatory nature, he remarked that they "would gain nothing by being explained—if the thing were possible." Despite the poet's comment, they have given rise to numerous studies and exegeses and their meaning, if not entirely agreed upon, is at least much clearer today than it was to his contemporaries.

Basic to the whole set is the anguish stated in the "Christ on the Mount of Olives" group of five poems. There, imitating the German mystical poet Jean-Paul Richter, he depicts Christ as the eternal embodiment of man's despair in a silent, godless universe. "Brothers," he cries to his disciples, "I deceived you: All

is emptiness! Abyss! /The god is missing
at the altar where I am the victim. . . .
/There is no God! God is no longer!"

"Frères, je vous trompais: Abîme!
abîme! abîme!

Le dieu manque à l'autel où je suis la
victime

Dieu n'est past! Dieu n'est plus!"

Faced with the inevitability of physical death, and the loss of his belief in the Christian salvation, the poet was to find a new hope of immortality in the animism of the pagan past. His Pythagorean conception of a sentient universe is formulated in the final poem of the *Chimerae*, "Vers dorés" ("Golden Verses"). This personal kind of religious eclecticism, which he called "syncretism," allowed him to see Christ as but one more archetypal incarnation of the "sublime fool"—the visionary, the poet, the discoverer—destroyed by his own aspirations, "this forgotten Icarus who ascended the heavens."

Cet Icare oublié qui remontait les
cieux.

In his desire to force the "gates of ivory" which conceal that ineffable reality of whose existence his mystical beliefs—and his dreams—assured him, he threw himself into the study of the occult like another Faust, no longer aspiring to anything but "knowledge of things supernatural, no longer capable of living within the limited circle of human desires." Events from his life, processed by memory, came to exist on the same plane as myth, illusion, dream, and those historical events which he adopted as part of his personal past. Through these revelations he was assured not only of personally overcoming death, but of recovering his beloved in another world. "It would be consoling," he muses, "to believe that eternity conserves in its bosom a sort of universal history, visible only through the eyes of the soul." If the past continues to exist in the present, then time and death are no longer to be feared. "Artémis,"

one of Nerval's most beautiful poems, postulates the fusion of past and present, expressed in the opening lines in terms of the indefinable period between the last (twelfth) hour and the first, which is at the same time the thirteenth, continuation and renewal:

La Treizième revient . . . C'est encor
la première;
Et c'est toujours la seule,—ou c'est le
seul moment. . . .

(The Thirteenth returns . . . once
more she is the first;
And she is still the only one, or this is
the only moment. . . .)

Just as dreams "flowed into real life," revealing the "super-reality" he sought, myth became for Nerval the key to the cycle of universal history, the retainer of archetypes. "Artémis" continues, applying to the lover and his beloved this same principle of eternal rebirth:

Car es-tu reine, ô toi! la première ou
dernière?
Es-tu roi, toi le seul ou le dernier
amant? . . .

(For you are surely queen, first and
last?
For you are surely king, O first and last
lover? . . .)

In the quest for his personal reality, Gerard Labrunie reveled in pseudonyms—his noble pen name is an example—and identified himself with many a figure of history or myth. The effectiveness of "El desdichado" ("The Outcast"), his most famous poem, is largely due to the interplay of these shifting identifications.

Je suis le ténébreux,—le veuf,—l'in-
consolé,
Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie:
Ma seule étoile est morte,—et mon luth
constellé
Porte le soleil noir de la Mélancolie.
Dans la nuit du tombeau, toi qui m'as
consolé,
Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer
d'Italie,

La fleur qui plaisait tant à mon coeur
désolé,
Et la treille où le pampre à la rose
s'allie.

Suis-je Amour ou Phébus? . . . Lusignan
ou Biron?
Mon front est rouge encor du baiser de
la reine;
J'ai rêvé dans la grotte où nage la
sirène . . .

Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé
l'Achéron:
Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre
d'Orphée
Les soupirs de la sainte et les cris de
la fée.

(I am the dark man, the disconsolate
widower,
The prince of Aquitania whose tower
has been torn down:
My sole *star* is dead,—and my con-
stellated lute
Bears the black *sun* of *Melancholia*.)

In the darkness of my grave, you who
have consoled me,
Give me back Posilipo and the Italian
sea,
The flower so dear to my tormented
heart,
And the arbor of vines where the rose
twines the branch.

Am I Amor or Phoebus? . . . Lusignan
or Biron?
My forehead is still red with the kiss
of the queen;
In the grotto where the siren swims I
have had a dream . . .

And twice I have crossed and conquered
the Acheron:
On Orpheus' lyre in turn I have sent

The cries of faery and the sighs of a
saint.)

Through the loss of his beloved (his "*sole star*") he has become several almost allegorical types and a figure from medieval legend. Again, when he asks if he is Amor or Phoebus, Lusignan or Biron, he is seeking his true role—lover or poet?—and wondering whether his love has been a real woman or a creature of fantasy. These names, however, are not simply literary symbols. The poem is a distillation of Nerval's mystical experience.

Like so many aspects of his life, his search for the Eternal Feminine developed within the context of a play of opposites. Woman is "saint" or "fée," source of life and light or mysterious apparition from the world of darkness. Although she took on many contradictory forms during his lifetime, there was only one object of Nerval's love. Having twice crossed the frontiers of madness (the Acheron) and returned successfully, he knew that only in death could he find his Beloved. On the night of January 28, 1855, he stepped into that other existence, fulfilling the prophecy in "Artémis":

Aimez qui vous aima du berceau dans
la bière;
Celle que j'aimai seul m'aime encor
tendrement:
C'est la mort—ou la morte . . . O
délice! ô tourment!

(Love the one who loved you from
the cradle to the grave;/
The one alone I love loves me dearly
still:
She is death—or the dead one. . . .
Delight or torment!)

THE POETRY OF NICHOLAS BRETON

Author: Nicholas Breton (1545?-1626?)

Principal published works: *Bower of Delights*, c. 1591; *Pilgrimage to Paradise*, 1592; *Arbor of Amorous Devices*, 1597; *Melancholic Humours*, 1600; *Poems in England's Helicon*, 1600; *The Passionate Shepherd*, 1604

Who can live in heart so glad
As the merry country lad?

Who upon a fair green balk
May at pleasure sit and walk?

Thus Breton asks and gives the answer in *The Passionate Shepherd*, just as Marlowe and Raleigh and other Elizabethans, from Sidney and Spenser to Shakespeare and Jonson, lyrically spoke. The pastoral, the idyll, the lyric, and the satire reached classic heights during the period, with Nicholas Breton one of its most artistic voices.

His voice was varied; his background was obscure; he was praised and ridiculed by his eminent peers. He possessed both versatility and refinement as a writer of satire, romance, pastorals in prose and verse, but he excelled in lyric verse. His devotion to letters is unquestioned and attested to by one after another of the Elizabethan giants. As a friend of Sidney, a protégé of Spenser, he was the devoted servant to a great patroness of poets, Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke. Most critics agree that this patronage, especially in Breton's allegorical *Pilgrimage to Paradise*, brought to the highest his considerable talent. Also, in the lines "Nor was the labor little for to climb/The fiery ashes of a phoenix nest" he speaks not only with religious fervor of the risen Christ but of Sidney's memory.

Apparently Breton was one of the first careful anthologizers, including leading artists in his *Bower of Delights* and *Arbor of Amorous Devices* contributing himself to another collection sometimes ascribed to him, *England's Helicon*. His scholarly nature suggests an Oxford background, accented by dedications to "schollars and students of Oxford." His satire, expressed through the pseudonym of Pasquil, is not up to the wittier works of Nashe and Green, though he obviously moved among the university wits, "the tribe of Ben."

The dispute of his religious sympathies does not seem important today. His epitaph to Spenser, his invocation of the memory of Sidney, his devotional fervors, are all full of passionate yearning and rich imagery. His true religion, however,

was chivalric and pastoral love, and his most memorable poems serve this cult:

Good Muse, rock me asleep
With some sweet harmony;
This weary eye is not to keep
Thy wary company.

Sweet Love, be gone awhile
Thou knowest my heaviness;
Beauty is born but to beguile
My heart of happiness.

And, therefore, my sweet Muse,
Thou knowest what help is best;
Do now thy heavenly cunning use
To set my heart at rest.

And in a dream bewray,
What Fate shall be my friend;
Whether my life shall still decay,
Or when my sorrow end.

Contrapuntal to such effusions is another vein, richer in both poetry and prose, of country life and rural scenery and customs: "Shall we go dance the hay, the hay?" expresses this theme, and "Sylvan Muses, can ye sing/ Of the beauty of the spring?" celebrates all things of nature, birds, trees, and flowers, with mythological overtones. However, one of his most celebrated poems, "A Sweet Lullaby," has a darker theme:

Come, little babe, come, silly soul,
Thy father's shame, thy mother's
grief,
Born as I doubt to all our dole,
And to thyself unhappy chief:
Sing lullaby and lap it warm,
Poor soul that thinks no creature
harm.

The poet asks the "little wretch" born out of wedlock to think kindly of his misguided father and miserable mother and then surprisingly acknowledges the child's paternity:

Come, little boy, and rock asleep!
Sing lullaby, and be thou still!
I, that can do nought else but weep,
Will sit by thee and wail my fill:
Good bless my babe, and lullaby,
From this thy father's quality.

Again, the poet anticipates the later metaphysical writers in his use of conceit, elaborate metaphors turned on key phrases: "Lovely kind, and kindly loving;/Such a mind were worth the moving;/Truly fair, and fairly true,/Where are all these but in you?" He elaborates the "Sweet, fair, wise, kind, blessed true,/Blessed be all these in you," in his *Melancholic Humours*. In "An Assurance" he asks, "Say that I should say I love ye,/Would you say 'tis but a saying?" and "Think I think that love should know ye,/Will you think 'tis but a thinking?" and then goes on to vow his love in the high hope that she will love in

return. These witty and pretty conceits are of a high order and Breton deserves their fame.

In his prose Nicholas Breton wrote "essays, Morall and Divine," a "conference between scholler and angler," and *Fantastickes*, prose pictures of months, hours, and festivals. But he also wrote *A Poem to Our Saviour's Passion* and *Toyes of an Idle Head*, a "Floorish upon Fancie." In short, he was a Renaissance Man and exhibited *virtu*, the vigor and the erudition and restless activity of his day, not inferior at times to those better remembered in the history of English literature.

THE POETRY OF OWEN

Author: Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1920; *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, edited by Edmund Blunden, 1931

For Wilfred Owen, born and brought up in the Housman country of Shropshire and Shrewsbury, reader of Keats, Tennyson, and Swinburne, a young poet devoted to boyish "loneliness" and the aesthetic cult of Beauty, wounded March 19, 1917, again on May 1, and killed in action November 4, 1918, Beauty was no escape. The horrors of war, in Owen's hands, were transfigured in poems into a terrible beauty.

The war itself did not make Owen a poet, but it did mature his poems, as if overnight; too, the war never completely dissolved his early yearning for a misty, aesthetic Beauty. But the war transformed that Beauty from a literary dream to a stark necessity, held to in the face of the horrors recorded so bluntly, spat out, in the devastating "Dulce et Decorum Est."

Owen, who published only three poems during his short lifetime, could find cause for elation, within two months of his death, at being accepted "as a peer" by the generally innocuous Georgian poets, those purveyors of sentiment and pictures of the English countryside.

But his poetry had before them moved sharply away from both the literary aestheticism of his youth and the either jingoistic or merely homesick poesy which had been the first two reactions to the war which, begun in August, 1914, was to be "over by Christmas."

Just before the outbreak of war, Owen could write in his diary poems about wind murmuring in the leaves and birds singing. Such evidence of a boy's experiments with sound and celebration of youth and a pastoral setting is obviously a young man's conception of poetry, based not on any real experience but probably on an immature reading of Keats, Tennyson, and Swinburne. His last known poem, "Smile, Smile, Smile," starkly illustrates how daydreams have turned into nightmares, the disingenuous into the ironic, aestheticism into social protest, beauty and truth into a deeply-felt pity which, while expressed with mature artistic detachment, is nonetheless a product of personal pain, fear, and moral outrage. The soldiers read the home-town paper and think of buying homes after the war.

The poem also describes the stupid, callous, mawkish sentiment and blindness of the Home Front.

Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, Isaac Rosenberg, and Owen were the first poets to take another look at the war which had at first been regarded as a kind of sacred crusade. In his study of Owen, D. S. R. Welland writes of how, by about 1915, the emphasis in the anthologies of "war poetry" had shifted righteous nature of the crusade to the knightly crusader. The latter response merely replaced national glorification with self-pity, or, at best, evocations of better times in England. Obviously, neither reaction produced much in the way of an honest, fully human poetry. The old ways died hard.

The third reaction was one of protest, and Sassoon, perhaps, or Rosenberg, was most biting in satirical attack. Sassoon met Owen in a hospital in England, and Owen's mature war poetry dates, roughly, from their long discussions (though to say that Sassoon "made" Owen a poet is a vast distortion). Owen, however, expressed his protest not so much satirically as through a mixture of sarcasm, ironic detachment, and, most importantly, of pity. His verse loses the old melodiousness of the "Celtic twilight," and becomes hard, direct, colloquial, strongly cadenced. In this respect he was not different than the other poets of the war. In Owen, however, pity for the "poor wretches" is dominant both over pity for himself (of which there is absolutely none) and satiric protest at the perpetrated outrage of war, or the naïve, even criminal stupidities mouthed at home. And the pity is rooted not in condescension or gratuitous superiority, but in a profound awareness of human fellowship and fellow-suffering.

In "Strange Meeting" the poet meets an enemy he had killed. They meet in Hell, where he had fled to escape the terror of battle in a dream-vision. They must find fellowship in Hell itself, for Earth has become worse. The German is

not a fiend, a killer who delights in atrocities and is devoted to crushing freedom and the British Empire, but a man who, like the poet, dreamed and hoped. Neither the dead nor the living indulges in self-pity. The "enemy" refers to the pity the war has distilled, but by "pity" the poet means not for self, but for his fellows, for humanity itself. Indeed, Owen develops finally a viewpoint which is largely characteristic of the poetry of World War II: a poetry not so much of protest but of a recognition of how, in the horror of battle, human fellowship is starkly, and of necessity, thrown into sharp relief. Enforced murder breeds, at last, a kind of gentleness.

Poems like "Apologia pro Poemate Mea" must be understood in this context. Death becomes a joke, and the men laugh in its face, not out of false bravado, but out of a sense of a new awareness of life, death, and fellowship. What seems bravado is, instead, an honest account of actual human response to a living, absurd hell. The death-bound comradeship, both pitiable and defiant of battle comrades, is a theme on which Owen probes the paroxysm of war more deeply and poignantly than any protest alone could. It is the core of his achievement, and his frequently quoted statement that he was not concerned with "Poetry" must be understood in terms of this attitude. Poetry, here, suggests the old illusions, the old "literary" aestheticism, poesy of birds and Greek goddesses and pastoral landscapes. To a large extent it refers to Owen's own youthful effusions and illusions. Now the poetry is in such matters as pity and protest.

In the matter of style, it should be noted that Owen's development away from the vague, vaporous, and pseudo-Keatsian effusions of his youth, his development of a style which is abrupt, chiseled, and colloquially dramatic, corresponds to a general drift in the poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Parallel developments occur in the poetry of Yeats, and T. E. Hulme

(who also was killed in the war). Pater and Pound had called for a more objective, "harder" or "classical" poetry, and this development may be traced in Imagism or, better, in Yeats and Eliot. In Yeats, the line of development is clear from the softly sensuous and evocative "symbolism" of his early poem to the harder and more genuinely symbolic and dramatic specimens of *The Green Helmet and Other Poems*, published in 1910.

But Wilfred Owen, until he met Sassoon in 1917, had had no important contact with the literary world, and his development of terse, "hard" idiom must have been only a natural and necessary way of expressing, without illusions, lies, evasion, and the stark and monumentally

un-"Poetic" reality of war.

Owen's experiments with slant and internal rhyme, with nonmetrical cadences and compressions like that of "blood-shod," are significant steps toward a poetry which moves away from the more regular and traditionally "poetic" work of the previous two centuries. Owen influenced, in this respect, later poets like Auden, C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice. But it is his individual and searing exposure of both the horror and the pity of war that provides Owen a lasting niche in the history of English poetry. A world changed during his short lifetime. His ability to change with it, and to record the old world's dying anguish, is his unique and memorable achievement.

THE POETRY OF PASTERNAK

Author: Boris Pasternak (1890-1960)

Principal published works: *Bliznets v oblake*, 1914 (*Twin in the Clouds*); *Poerklo baryerov*, 1917 (*Over the Barriers*); *Sestra moya zhizn'*, 1922 (*Life, My Sister*); *Temyi variatsii*, 1923 (*Themes and Variations*); 1905 *God*, 1926; *Lieutenant Schmidt*, 1927; *Spectorsky*, 1932; *Vtoroye rozhdenie*, 1932 (*Second Birth*); *Na rannikh poyez dakh*, 1941 (*On Early Trains*); *Zemnoy Prostor*, 1945 (*The Terrestrial Expanse*)

Translation is the sea change for poetry, often giving it a different coloring and new or odd dimensions during its passage from one language to another. For the linguistic artifact which is the poem, by reason of its structure achieved in and its meaning expressed through language, cannot speak in another tongue with the same sonance, precision, or authority that it possesses in the original. The best that the translator can hope to accomplish is to keep as intact as possible those elements of the poem which resist the violence of change: the larger meaning, the revealing image or metaphor, and sometimes, with luck, an echo of cadence. Without these effects the translation falls into toneless literal statement at one extreme or paraphrase, too frequently distorted and irresponsible, at the other.

In the case of Boris Pasternak, a poet of intensely personal vision and idiosyncratic style, the task of translation must appear insurmountable at times. The problem of adequate rendition involves more than the barrier of language and the difficulties arising from the writer's passionate fusion of image and meaning. It is also one of distance, the gap between two parts of a world divided by temperament, culture, and ideology in this century. Pasternak is a Russian as well as a contemporary, and reading him with understanding requires adjustment to a different picture of the world and a different evaluation of the human condition.

In his poems Pasternak's figurative tendency found expression in a joining of symbolist techniques and pantheistic feeling. Historically, he was the heir of Rus-

sian symbolism, a tradition he shared with Mayakovsky and Esenin in the post-revolutionary period. Symbolism in Russian literature is not to be confused, however, with the similar movement in France, where it was directed chiefly toward experiment with new modes of poetic expression. The Russian symbolists, although concerned with the re-creation of language, were also interested in a new consciousness of the universe and a new concept of man. Thus Mayakovsky was able to find his themes in the mythology of the revolution; Esenin voiced a lament for archaic peasant Russia, and Pasternak tried to make his poetry an expression and configuration of the essence and uniqueness of being.

In the beginning his images were abrupt, often disparate and startling, always vigorous and imaginative. His images function on both a literal and a symbolic level. A good example showing the poet's vivid imagery is present in his poem entitled "The Racing Stars."

The lines provide an illustration of T. S. Eliot's theory that a poem may be appreciated, its meaning sensed, before it is really understood. In "The Racing Stars" the appeal is almost wholly to the imagination and the senses. The subject proper is Pushkin's composition of a poem, *The Prophet*, worked at with creative energy during a night when the world—humanity—sleeps through the cold darkness. By illustration the poet is trying to express the miracle of artistic creation. A similar idea is expressed in "Definition of Poetry."

Pasternak's images are guideposts pointing to the true subject of his verse. It is the Russian land—not Holy Russia, nor revolutionary Russia, but vast, bleak, irrational, beautiful Russia—that he celebrated in his poems. His pictures are of the land itself: the rain falling in village streets, the dusty roads in summer, the steppes swept by blizzards, silent snows, thunderstorms, railway stations, dandelions, lilacs, birch trees, mushrooms, the

smell of plowed earth. He found these things the true feelings guarded in man's heart. He did mention the Sahara, the Ganges, and European cities in his poems, but the place names about which associations cluster are the Moscow suburbs, the Caucasus, the Urals, Kiev, the Gulf of Finland, and the Siberian wastes. The same is true of the people in his poems. He invoked the names of Shakespeare and Beethoven, but his special reverence was for Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and Chekhov. Apparently Pasternak thought of these four as the Russians of Russians, writers in whose works the land and its people found expression.

To Western readers, Pasternak's intense Russian feeling makes all the more incomprehensible his isolation and the name-calling to which he was subjected. One answer is that he held aloof from the stratagems of totalitarian dictatorship. Never an opportunist, in literature or in politics, he wrote no poems in celebration of collective farms, factory production, or the dictates of the Party line. Instead, he insisted upon the artist's right to privacy, freedom, and process of thought described as song. The closing lines of "Thrushes" may be interpreted as a statement of his position.

But it should not be supposed, as many readers of *Doctor Zhivago* mistakenly assumed, that Pasternak was the enemy of the revolution. He had accepted it, just as he accepted the feelings of happiness and sturdiness, as a part of the oneness and wholeness of living reality. Many of his images of turbulence relate to the great storm of the revolution in which he had been a spectator, if not a participant, of its violence. In *Lieutenant Schmidt*, the story of a mutinous officer executed for his part in the sailors' uprising at Sebastopol in 1905, he wrote that he stood between the past and the present in conflict, a position he himself had chosen. Here, perhaps, is the clue to his refusal of commitment. He looked from past to present and into the future.

His larger vision of man *sub specie aeternitatis* is the sustaining force of Pasternak's poetry, a vision directed toward

the unknown and unexplored future of mankind.

THE POETRY OF PAZ

Author: Octavio Paz (1914-)

Principal published works: *Raíz del Hombre*, 1937; *Bajo tu Clara Sombra*, 1937; *Entre la Piedra y la Flor*, 1941; *A la Orilla del Mundo*, 1942; *Libertad bajo Palabra*, 1949; *¿Águila o Sol? Poemas en Prosa*, 1951; *Semillas para un Himno*, 1954; *Piedra del Sol (Sun Stone)*, 1957; *La Estación Violenta*, 1958; *Libertad bajo Palabra: obra poetica 1935-1958*, 1960; *Salamandra*, 1962; *Selected Poems of Octavio Paz*, translated by Muriel Rukeyser, 1963

In Mexico the tradition of poetry extends back into ancient times. Even in pre-Columbian days the country could boast of poets among some of the Indian rulers and an oral poetic tradition of great aesthetic value mingled with rites and mythologies. The Indian poet performed an official function and was the speaker of the community. When the Spaniards arrived, they found, mainly among Aztecs, a rich body of poems, both lyric and epic, chanting the eternal themes of mankind: divinity, death, time, beauty, and the heroic deeds of warriors and gods. During the so-called colonial period, under Spanish rule, Mexico continued to speak with poetic voice. The European literary movements of Baroqueism and Neoclassicism found a well-prepared soil in which poetic expression could flourish. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a nun considered perhaps the best feminine poet in Spanish-speaking countries, left a copious testimony of poems of standing value. Later, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Modernism was represented in Mexico by poets of great renown, such as Gutiérrez Nájera, Díaz Mirón, Othón, González Martínez, Nervo, and Urbina, who together with other Spanish-American poets, especially the leader of the movement, Rubén Darío, gave to the Western world the first uncontaminated and original literary expression of Latin America.

In this century, though poetry has been somewhat disregarded, Mexican

writers have not completely neglected the poetic attitude. López Velarde, Torres Bodet, Pellicer, José Gorostiza, Novo, and Villaurrutia represent, among others, some of the leading figures of modern poetry in Spanish. As the most recent and famous voice, Octavio Paz has been acclaimed Mexico's greatest living poet.

He began his poetic career under the auspices of the group called *Taller* (Workshop). Some of the traits of this group were opposition to the merely literary expression and the search for the original word, the *mot juste*. A poem is not to be regarded as an exercise of expression but an act of vital affirmation. Man must use poetry as a way of stating not only his inner thoughts and feelings, but his condition of social being. Under these premises we deal with Paz's work. His poetry is not an easy one. Nourished in wide reading, always alert to the deep and wide in every cultural direction, at the same time Mexican and universal, traditional and modern, Paz in his poetry embraces many ideas, attitudes, problems, and forms of expression. He has delved into the study of many philosophic, religious, and aesthetic movements. Proof of this statement is found in his inquisitive books in prose in which he has analyzed the soul of his country, the creative process of poetry, and the problems of artistic expression in different cultures. Having lived as a diplomat in many countries, both in the Western and the Eastern world, in con-

tact with different and sometimes opposite ways of life, he can say, like Terentius, that because he is a man nothing is alien to him.

El Laberinto de la Soledad (*The Labyrinth of Solitude*) is the title of one of Paz's books in prose. It could be applied to the perspective of his poetry which in some ways resembles a labyrinth, not exactly because it is confusing, but because of its hermetism and intricacies. It is a poetry of solitude because the writer's basic attitude is that of a man who feels alone in the world, always in need of the "other" to attain his own self-realization. As an inference of this attitude, man can be said to be a half-being who strives after his integration and completion. He intends to reach this state of fulfillment by three elements: the poetry, which reveals the unity of mankind; love, which makes the ego realize himself in the "you"; and the sacred, which shows the "other shore" of life. This itinerary begins in solitude, is continuously stimulated by desire, and tends to arrive at the communication.

Paz's literary technique of expression is that of surrealism, so that he may appear incongruous and unnatural on the surface. Though this is true on some occasions, Paz is not, however, a poet of mere free associations and emptiness of message. His poetry has both width and depth. He embraces all the basic problems of man and deals with them in a tragic and sympathetic way. He hates the easy expression because he thinks that poetry is a very serious, complex, almost magic task, not reserved to the multitude but to a very few people capable of delving into the analysis of the most intimate problems surrounding human life.

Libertad bajo Palabra (*Freedom and the Word*), in its second published edition in 1960, is a collection of the best poems written by Paz between 1937 and 1960. In the prologue to this book he said that he wrote the word freedom, a word that created itself and him. These words mean that the poet creates his

poetic universe in spite of himself and others, and that the poetry is a way of liberation, a need and the outmost revelation of the poet.

Poetry becomes a consubstantiation with the poet and makes him feel his true origins.

Images of opposition and conflict cloud the eyes of the poet. He does not find his place in this world, nor does he believe in earth or heaven; he is anchored in a sea of skepticism and desperation, and cries in solitude, as in "Nor Heaven nor Earth."

Prisoner in a contradictory world, man has the obligation of being audacious, though he knows at the same time that he is slave of necessity and is the alpha and the omega of himself in a cyclical process of creation and destruction.

Paz intends also through his poetry to touch the limits of the absolute, mainly through love, which is a hunger of life.

In "The Broken Jar" and "Sun Stone," his best and longest poems, Paz takes ancient Mexican mythologies and symbols to eddy into the most universal and intimate themes of mankind. In the first of these poems, Paz begins by presenting the jewelry of the Mexican sky in a rich enumeration of metaphors. In contrast with such wealth, he looks at the vast wasteland surrounding him, flooded with blood, dust, and misery. He recalls the Aztec gods of abundance and rain, and sees that the only prevailing divinity in this land is the toad, symbol of drought and scarcity.

The poet then makes transference and its mythologies to the spiritual world from the reference to the Mexican land of man. This is also a barren land, a broken jar, in thirsty quest of water, namely, in anxious quest of others. Words and love are the best vehicle for this communication. They give the human being the deep, true, original significance of his existence.

Piedra de Sol (*Sun Stone*) is Paz's most ambitious poem. There is in it an obvious reference to the Sun Stone of the Aztecs,

better known as the Calendar Stone, a huge block representing the history of the world and embodying the statement of the infinity of the Aztec universe. In the center of this stone is the sun set within the sign Four Motions representing according to Aztec mythology, the dates of the four previous ages of the world. Among many other symbols there are two immense fire serpents, symbolic of the year and time, circling the exterior to meet each other at the base.

In this poem, Paz wants to call up the sense of repetition of human life within eternity and the sense of ambiguity and duality of the universe. Written in 584 lines, the same number of days that it takes the planet Venus to complete its synodic period, the poem strives to be cyclical also. The first six lines of the poem are the last ones, signifying the re-entry into a new and identical cycle. After this beginning the poet deals with

himself, placed in the world, among past and future, spending an ephemeral life made only of instants. Love is, among all human experiences, the deepest and most rewarding.

However, consubstantial to love is death; therefore, all human experiences, including love, are nothing in contrast with eternity. Under this dimension, life is an instant, a symbol, nothing. The only true way of reaching completeness of oneself is by existing for others.

Finally the poet longs for birth and light amidst death and shadow.

Poet of metaphysical uneasiness, tortured by the most radical human problems, with his sensitivity always prone to perceive and analyze every new mainstream of thought, Paz has reached a prominent position among the poets of his generation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in him Mexico has her best and deepest-insighted living poet.

THE POETRY OF PÉGUY

Author: Charles Péguy (1873-1914)

Principal published works: *Joan of Arc*, 1897; *Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc*, 1910; *The Portal of the Mystery of the Second Virtue*, 1911; *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents*, 1912; *The Tapestry of Saint Genevieve and Joan of Arc*, 1912; *The Tapestry of Notre Dame*, 1913; *Eve*, 1913

Charles Péguy's life, thought, and poetry are inextricably mixed. He was born in total poverty. His intelligence and energy, with the help of scholarships, got him through excellent schools, but he always remained a man of the people both in his life, religion, and poetry. In school he was deeply influenced by the thought of Henri Bergson, and he adopted a philosophy of motion and change rather than the traditional philosophies of static values.

In his youth Péguy became deeply involved in the Dreyfus affair, but when the cause was exploited by selfish politicians, he became a Marxist. Yet he remained an almost mystically patriotic Frenchman, so that, when his socialist colleagues turned to pacifism and interna-

tionalism, Péguy (while maintaining his socialist ethic) turned away. He was convinced that war between Germany and France was inevitable, and he wanted to defend France. Also, in 1908, just before he began writing the largest body of his poetry, he returned to the Catholic faith, a strange and, as always with Péguy, very personal brand of Catholicism. He rejected the dogma of damnation, but in the most literal way he accepted the doctrine of salvation and the cult of the saints, especially the Virgin and Joan of Arc. In *Joan*, who was an important subject of his poetry, Péguy could simultaneously adore God and France. In one way or another these two things were always the poet's themes.

Péguy, who is almost the object of

worship by a large cult of admirers in France, has never been well received in the United States. His style is simple, incantatory, and free. His most obvious characteristic is quantity; some of his poems are hundreds of pages long. He achieves his effects mostly through repetition and expansion of themes, sometimes to the point of diffuseness. His diction is invariably colloquial and purposely naïve. Yet he is undeniably a powerful, major poet. Except in his last poems, his verse is entirely free and unlike anything else in French. With one exception, all of the poet's major work was written in an incredible four-year burst of energy that ended only with his death in battle, leading an attack, in 1914.

Joan of Arc, an immense three-hundred-page drama, was Péguy's first real attempt at poetry, or, rather, lyricism: the texture of the piece is an intermixture of freely rhymed verse, rhythmical and normal prose, and versets inspired by the rhetoric of the Bible, or, perhaps, the choral movement of ancient tragedy. The text, moreover, is given poetic unity by a structure of symbolism that tends to heighten Péguy's poetic prose still more. The drama, almost impossible to stage, if only because of its great length, is based on the familiar story of Joan of Arc and is divided into three sections: "At the Village of Domremy," "The Battles," and "Orleans." The first section is divided into three parts and ten acts; the second part is divided into three parts and eight acts; and the last section falls into two parts and six acts. The tone is, as was to become usual in Péguy's poetry, one of solemn simplicity. In the play the mysticism of Joan and the humanitarianism of Péguy are interpenetrating.

After his return to belief in 1908, Péguy once more set himself to writing poetry. In 1910 he published his *Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc*. This was followed in 1911 by *The Portal of the Mystery of the Second Virtue*, and in 1912 by *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents*. Once more he used the verset and

lyrical prose as his medium. These vast plays are an innovation in form. By "Mystery" Péguy meant two things: he was writing dramas which are meditations on the Holy Mysteries of the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity); and he was reviving in modern terms the mystery play genre of the Middle Ages.

The Charity of Joan of Arc is essentially a dialogue between Joan and Madame Gervaise, a fervent, contemplative, simple-hearted young nun who had figured in Péguy's earlier *Joan of Arc* trilogy. The central theme of the piece is the love, the "Charity" of Joan. In *The Portal of the Mystery of the Second Virtue* and in *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents* it is, for the most part, God who speaks through the mouth of Madame Gervaise. Both of these Mysteries celebrate "Hope," which is the universal animating force. Without hope the world would wither to nothingness; it is everything. God himself is amazed at it. God's tone and voice in Péguy's poetry are not at all what we hear in Job: mighty, distant, imperious. Rather, Péguy's God, speaking through the mouth of a very simple woman, is familiar, human, and just a little innocent.

After writing *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents*, Péguy in 1912 began writing regular and formal verse. He published a number of shorter lyric poems in regular stanzas in 1912 and 1913. Among the better known of these is "Seven Against Thebes" ("Les Sept contre Thèbes") a remarkable new version of the classical Theban story; "The Loire Chateaus" ("Châteaux de Loire"); and "Seven Against Paris" ("Les Sept contre Paris"), a strange paean in praise of the expansion, growth, history, and cultural development of Paris. The major part of this poem is one long sentence, constituted of thirty quatrains, which does not conclude or make sense until the last line. Péguy also wrote during this period of his career a long series of quatrains which he felt were too private to publish;

they did not appear until 1941. In the quatrains he dramatized a private struggle between desire and his duty. These poems are apropos of a personal involvement Péguy, for the sake of his family and faith, resisted successfully.

Most important in this change to formal verse, however, are Péguy's *Tapestries* (*Tapisseries*). Once again looking for a new poetic form to carry his artistic and spiritual vision, the poet looked to the Middle Ages. Modeling his poetry, metaphorically, on the carefully worked, slowly woven wall coverings made during the high Middle Ages by master craftsmen of great patience, Péguy sought to weave poems by interlacing threads of theme, symbol, and idea to form an orderly, repeated, but varying design. The poems are written in the way tapestries were woven: the design is slowly worked in until at the end, and only the end, the whole picture becomes visible. These poems, like medieval tapestries that took religious themes for their designs, are meant to grace a holy sanctuary. Like most of Péguy's work, they are of great size and length.

Altogether Péguy published three *Tapestries* before his death: *The Tapestry of Saint Genevieve and Joan of Arc* (1912); *The Tapestry of Notre Dame* (1913); and *Eve* (1913). *The Tapestry of Saint Genevieve* takes the form of a novena in which the patron saint of Paris and Joan, the French national heroine, are paid homage. The piece is made up

of nine separate poems, one for each day of the novena—the movement is toward a crescendo in the eighth poem, then to a decrescendo in the ninth. *The Tapestry of Notre Dame* is divided into two large sections, each made up of several smaller poems. The first part is the presentation of Paris to Notre Dame in which Péguy places the city in the care of the Virgin. The second part is the presentation of the countryside of Beauce to the Virgin at Chartres. The presentation takes the form of a pilgrimage to Chartres; it reflects a pilgrimage the poet actually made in fulfilment of a vow he had made when his son was ill with typhoid.

The last of the *Tapestries*, *Eve*, is thought by many to be Péguy's finest work. It is a single poem made up of about three thousand quatrains, over twelve thousand lines, and it has been called the most impressive piece of Catholic literature produced in France, with the exception of Corneille's *Polyeucte*, since the fourteenth century. Also, in its sweep and size and power it has frequently been compared to Victor Hugo's epic of the world, the *Legend of the Centuries*. The poem is impossible to describe; it is too all-inclusive. It progresses in a series of gradations of "climates," the climate of the earthly paradise, the climates of the Incarnation, the Fall, the Judgment, and so on. If the poem has a single theme, it is the double and interpenetrating spiritual and carnal creation, of which Eve is the archetypal symbol.

THE POETRY OF PRIOR

Author: Matthew Prior (1664-1721)

Principal published work: *Poems*, 1709

Many of the poems of Matthew Prior are in the pastoral mode: the poet adopts the age-old pretense of being a shepherd who sings, with rustic honesty, of the fortunes and misfortunes of his love. The woman appears as reluctant shepherdess in the pastoral convention, and the poet as a lovesick swain. Such poems as "Love

and Friendship: A Pastoral" invoke a vocabulary familiar to early eighteenth century poetry of this kind. The poem, like others by Prior and his contemporaries, begins with a description of the natural setting, the fields and skies of the rural landscape. A mood is the object of the description, and night is chosen as the fit

time to discourse on love and hope. A great part of the poem is devoted to the "charms" of the lady—the rest to their effect on the imagination of the swain. Other minor poems, like "To a Lady," attempt to reinvigorate the ancient poetic metaphor of love as war. The woman is the "victor" and the lover is the "slave." The poem is, of course, an invitation to love; it finds its central expression when it describes the woman who "triumphs, when She seems to yield."

The early poems of Prior have a large concentration of this courtly and pastoral type of art. "Celia to Damon" brings out once more the theme of love as a hopeless war, in which the lover is perpetually doomed to servitude and defeat. He describes the "Excess and Fury" of his love, and the beauty that confounds it. The tone of the poem, faithful to its models of hopeless and adoring passion, is intentionally pathetic. The great contrast the poem strives for is that between the humility of the lover and the "raging Love" and "swelling Seas of Rapture" in his soul. The lover assumes the familiar stance of the half-exalted and half-mad figure of romance. In response to worldly wisdom Prior's "Imitation of Anacreon" states "Love shall be my endless Theme"—and he invites the critics and all other in the community of the sane and responsible to mind their own business while he goes happily to his fate.

Prior did not confine himself to such poetry, which is often imitative. His "An English Ballad" is both heroic and satirical; perhaps its most obvious theme is that of witty skepticism:

If *Namur* be compar'd to *Troy*;
Then Britain's Boys excell'd the
Greeks:
Their Siege did ten long Years employ:
We've done our Bus'ness in ten
Weeks.

The great political and military struggles between England and France, Greece and Troy, are set in the context of parody, a mode which expresses the feeling

of the poet that these events are not altogether praiseworthy or even meaningful. The poem is in praise, ostensibly, of William of Orange, but the poem balances "Death, Pikes, Rocks, Arms, Bricks, and Fire" against the Lilliputian moral stature of the combatants. William, of course, comes off much better than his great rival, Louis XIV, but neither comes off very well in terms of the great idea of civilization which the poem raises. If Prior was a parodist of things political, he also was a parodist of matters amatory. Some of his better-known poems satirize the whole institution of love poetry and the courtly conventions to which it subscribed. "An English Padlock" and "Hans Carvel" are both intentionally indecent in that they express a thoroughly Augustan attitude toward romantic love. The first of these is not about pastoral lovers but about a jealous husband. The best way to handle a woman, Prior suggests in this poem, is not to write sonnets, nor is it to declare in limitless hyperbole the nature of one's passion. It is rather to allow her to see the world in all its false beauty, and to sicken of the truth.

"Paulo Purganti" is another of the poems which attacks romance and puts disillusioned objectivity in its place. The importance of the piece is its explicit relationship to the hard insights of Wycherly and Congreve. Prior begins by noting that things true may not be things beautiful, or even things moral. This is a worldly poem defending things "Beyond the fix'd and settl'd Rules." Pride is seen in its conflict with sex, and it is the latter that wins out. The woman is proud, the man is logical, but both pride and logic yield to the imperious instinct that denies all pretensions. The myth of human perfection dies hard. Prior returned to his deflating attack time after time. When he writes about the old story of the Greek gods visiting earth, it is not to expatiate on the piety of the old man and woman who are their hosts, but to reveal the cupidity and weakness of all men at all times. When he writes about learning, as

in "Merry Andrew," it is to point out that folly sometimes is better than wit. In short, Prior shares the insights of Pope and Swift into what has been called the human condition. He refuses to be deluded by conceptions of the ideal; he insists that reality is often disappointing.

Prior's lengthy "Alma," written while he was in prison after the fall of the Tory party in 1714, is a sardonic and skeptical review of human history. It begins by stating that the soul has been located by various philosophers in different places, but that it may best be known by the actions it motivates. The animating spirit of man, Prior suggests, enters the body "at the Toes" and then "mounts by just Degrees." The "system" thus described is a parody of philosophy, but it is a useful device to explain Prior's principal point: man begins in mere motion, then feels the effects of emotion as he grows older, and finally, when Alma nears the brain, he learns intelligence. Most men, Prior suggests, never attain the final stage, for Alma never visits their minds. His historical examples are many and comical. One is the hero of the Trojan War:

In scornful Sloth Achilles slept;
And for his Wench, like Tall-Boy,
wept:
Nor would return to War and
Slaughter;
"Till They brought back the Parson's
Daughter.

He then ranges from ancient to modern history, explaining with mock-seriousness how men as different as Mark Antony, Edward IV, and Henry IV were all united by their failure to allow Alma to get past their hearts.

Successive cantos of the poem describe all human folly as the consequence of the natural journey of Alma being interrupted and her powers diverted to serve a single function. The glutton confines the human spirit to his gullet; the lover confines his soul and mind to the senses; even the artist imprisons Alma to serve his "Fancy or Desire." All these corrup-

tions, Prior sums up, "Have got the better of his Mind." The confirmed huntsman will be blind to all things else in life; the girl who thinks of nothing but dancing will become an old woman ridiculous in the same affectation; the man whose Alma "Slip'd up too soon into his Tongue" will never let that weapon lie still. The poem concludes with a moral familiar to the reader of Alexander Pope: the man of full mental and moral development must allow mind and body, emotion and intelligence, their limited domination.

Prior's longest consideration of the state of man is his poem "Solomon on the Vanity of the World." The poem is divided into three parts: knowledge, pleasure, and power. In the first part Solomon convenes the wise men of his kingdom in order to find out the nature of happiness. A dialogue ensues in which he and the wise men discuss all of nature, from vegetative to human life. This discussion leads only to bewildering dilemmas and not to any solutions. No man at the court can satisfactorily explain the physical laws of nature; on the contrary, they reveal only their own ignorance and pride. Solomon concludes this first part by scornfully dismissing them and remarking on "How narrow Limits were to Wisdom giv'n." In the next part of the poem the king asks whether wealth can in fact give happiness, and he considers the principal means whereby men hope to capture happiness in physical objects. He states that he too has tried to make happiness the consequence of material joys, but that he has failed. He has tried luxurious palaces, gardens, feasts, and even works of art, yet none of these was able to give him a pleasure greater than the passing moment. Neither in music nor in dance could he discern any power of lasting pleasure. Disappointed in all these, and especially in love, the king concludes that he must explore not the exterior of all things but the interior of his own mind. The second book ends with a farewell to useless wealth and to both "Lust and

Love." The third begins by admitting that, because of the nature of the flesh itself, there is no real prospect of lasting happiness. The end of all things, Prior says, may be more desirable than the continual and futile search for joy. In short, his central character says, "Who breathes, must suffer; and who thinks, must mourn."

Prior began in pastoral poetry and very quickly wrote the kind of satirical and moralistic verse made popular by Alexander Pope. He became essentially a parodist, interested in the great disparities be-

tween the ideal and the actual. As his long poems "Alma" and "Solomon" indicate, he had his share of the satirist's pessimism. Yet he was not a negative thinker; the ending of "Solomon" is especially interesting for the manner in which the "various doubts" of its protagonist are dispelled. In the moral and religious life, and particularly in the enactment of biblical wisdom, Prior suggests that there is a possibility of human fulfillment. Like Pope and Swift, he furnishes a moral standard by which his satire must be measured.

THE POETRY OF RALEIGH

Author: Sir Walter Raleigh (c. 1552-1618)

First published: Selections published in various anthologies during lifetime; *Poems, with Biography and Critical Introduction*, 1813

Sir Walter Raleigh, like so many other Renaissance courtiers, considered the writing of poetry one of the polite arts, to be practiced in one's leisure moments for the pleasure of friends. In his busy political, military, and adventuring career, his poetic efforts apparently carried little weight, and he never seems to have encouraged their publication, though he was much interested in presenting to the public his history and his treatises on his expeditions to the new world. Consequently, over the years countless verses have been attributed to him, and no one can be sure how many of them he actually wrote. The small body of work that is unquestionably his, however, shows him to be a poet of high ability.

Though Raleigh was perhaps second only to Spenser and Sidney as poets in the court of Elizabeth I, he shunned the opulence of the typical poetry of his time for a sparse, dignified, manly style that has many echoes of his predecessors, Wyatt and Surrey. The melancholy quality that pervades much of Raleigh's work is close to that of almost all of Wyatt's poems and to the last lyrics of Surrey, written while he was in the Tower awaiting trial and execution. Raleigh himself spent

over ten years in the Tower, hoping against hope for release, and a sense of the constant closeness of death runs through his later work. Yet almost all of his poems, even the early ones, reveal a strong awareness of what Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost* calls "cormorant devouring Time." Life is precarious "beauty, fleeting," and death near at hand for all men. Raleigh's answer to Christopher Marlowe's famous pastoral lyric, "Come Live with Me and Be My Love," is filled with this sense of the transience of all things:

Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Raleigh protests against the actions of time in another lyric, "Nature that washt her hands in milke," where he describes the creation of the perfect woman by Nature, at the request of Love. This paragon no sooner exists than Time, "being

made of steel and rust, Turns snow, and silk and milk to dust." The final stanza is the eternal human lament:

Oh, cruel time! Which takes in trust
Our youth, our joys and all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust,
Who in the dark and silent grave
When we have wandered all our ways
Shuts up the story of our days.

While Wyatt's laments are most often those of the Petrarchan lover, scorned by the lady to whom he offers devotion, Raleigh's melancholy seems to derive from a more general vision of the human condition. Even in those sonnets where he takes the conventional stance of the rejected lover, he seems conscious of a larger world. One of these concludes:

And at my gate despair shall linger still,
To let in death when love and fortune
will.

Raleigh's sense of the destructive powers of time has particular force in his elegy on Sir Philip Sidney, an excellent poem in which the writer pays tribute to a fellow courtier-soldier-poet. There is in the "Epitaph" a touch of envy of Sidney, who died with an unblemished reputation and was freed from the threats of time and evil men:

What hath he lost, that such great
grace hath won?
Young years for endless years, and hope
unsure,
Of fortune's gifts, for wealth that still
shall dure,
Oh, happy race, with so great praises
run!

Like many other writers of his century, Raleigh uses his poetry to chastise the court for its hypocrisy, its vice, and its folly. Few men, indeed, suffered more from the false appearances of monarchs and their ministers. The brief stanzas of "The Lie" move over the whole spectrum of society:

Say to the court it glows,
And shines like rotten wood;
Say to the church, it shows

What's good, and doth no good:
If church and court reply,
Then give them both the lie.

The tone of Raleigh's poetry is not unmitigated gloom; few men were more vibrantly alive than this courtier-adventurer, and he could compose gay, witty lyrics with the best of his contemporaries, following out a pseudo-logical argument in the manner of Donne, singing lyrically about the beauty of the moon, or defining love in the vocabulary of the common man:

Yet what is love? I pray thee sain.
It is a sunshine mixed with rain;
It is a tooth-ache, or like pain;
It is a game where none doth gain;
The lass saith no, and would full fain:
And this is Love, as I hear sain.

There is much of the medieval heritage in Raleigh's work. Folk wisdom, proverbs, and the haunting quality of many of the early ballads lurk under the surface of several of his poems, notably one addressed to his son. The poem begins quietly and continues in a matter of fact way that reinforces its horror. Three things, "the wood, the weed, and the wag," prosper separately, but, together they bring destruction:

The wood is that, that makes the gal-
lows tree,
The weed is that, that strings the hang-
man's bag;
The wag, my pretty knave betokens
thee.
Now mark, dear boy: while these as-
semble not,
Green springs the tree, hemp grows, the
wag is wild;
But when they meet, it makes the tim-
ber rot,
It frets the halter, and it chokes the
child.

God bless the child!

Medieval in a different sense is one of Raleigh's last and best poems, "The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage." Its Christian allegory is like that of parts of Book I of *The Faerie Queene* and of Bunyan's *The*

Pilgrim's Progress, with all of life described in the imagery of a traveler's journey to salvation:

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

Raleigh's irregular metrical pattern is admirably suited to his subject; the simplicity of his acceptance of redemption in the second section is mirrored in the short rhymed lines, the clarity of the language, and the images of silver, nectar, milk, and crystal. The fourth section, with its theme of judgment, is harsher in both rhythm and vocabulary, as Raleigh speaks of Christ as the advocate, pleading the cause of sinful man in a court where bribery and forgery have no place, a compelling allusion to the trial in which Sir Edward Coke, not Christ, was the King's Attorney, and the verdict was, in the minds of most men, a travesty of justice. The concluding stanza has something of the macabre quality of a few of Donne's poems: Raleigh is said to have written these last lines on the night before his execution:

Just at the stroke when my veins start
and spread
Set on my soul an everlasting head.
Then am I ready like a palmer fit,
To tread those blest paths which before
I writ.

Raleigh's longest extant poem is a fragment of a still more extensive work called "Ocean's Love to Cynthia." The original version, so far as scholars have been able to deduce, was addressed to Queen Elizabeth about 1587, when Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, seemed to be replacing Raleigh in her esteem. In its first form the poem evidently served its purpose, for Raleigh was reinstated in Her Majesty's favor until his indiscreet affair and hasty marriage with one of her maids of honor in 1592. It has been suggested that the surviving fragment of the

poem was written from the Tower, where Raleigh had been imprisoned with his bride, in an attempt to mollify Elizabeth's resentment.

The quatrains of the extant text are presented as the outpourings of a disillusioned lover of the queen. There is no real narrative link; the whole poem is essentially the exposition of a state of mind. It is written in four-line stanzas with alternate rhymes, a compact form that lends itself to the development of a slightly different point in each quatrain. The extant manuscript is evidently an unfinished version of the poem, for occasionally Raleigh left two, three, or five lines as a separate unit to be revised later. However, even if the poem as it exists is unfinished, it demonstrates forcefully Raleigh's power to convey his deep and intense disillusionment. Toward the end of the fragment the poet, speaking as a shepherd, like Spenser in his "Colin Clout's Come Home Again," another record of a writer's unhappy experiences at court, ponders the paradox of his state of mind. However, his mistress treats him, she is with him forever: *She is gone, she is lost, she is found, she is ever fair.* He can only take life as it comes, let his flocks wander at will, and live with his despair:

Thus home I draw, as death's long
night draws on;
Yet every foot, old thoughts turn back
mine eyes;
Constraint me guides as old age draws
a stone
Against the hill, which over-weighty
lies

He must, in the last analysis, trust in the mercies of God.

Raleigh never entirely fulfilled his promise as a poet. His intense interest in colonizing projects, his career at court during his early maturity, and his later political misfortunes probably combined to prevent his devoting his energies to poetry; and his gigantic project, the *History of the World*, left far from complete

at his death, occupied his last years in the Tower. Yet the works he did leave are among the best of what C. S. Lewis called "Drab" poetry in the Elizabethan age. The virtues of his poems are their

quiet strength and the melancholy tone which was the almost inevitable result of his skeptical, inquiring mind; and they are almost always clear and satisfying in their own low-keyed way.

THE POETRY OF ROBERT LOWELL

Author: Robert Lowell, Jr. (1917-)

Principal published works: *Land of Unlikeness*, 1944; *Lord Weary's Castle*, 1946; *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*, 1951; *Life Studies*, 1959; *Imitations*, 1961; *For the Union Dead*, 1964; *Near the Ocean*, 1967

Of the generation of American poets who came to prominence in the years following World War II, Robert Lowell has emerged as the acknowledged master and, evidently, the most likely candidate for greatness, the odds-on favorite to fill the shoes of our century's first generation of poets, the generation which included Pound, Eliot, Williams, Stevens, and Frost. In the 1960's he has managed to win acceptance and unquestioned recognition by all cliques and schools of contemporary poetry and by a dazzling array of critics at home and abroad. While it must be admitted that some of his reputation is the result of pervasive American insistence upon celebrity in all aspects of our culture, still it represents no slight achievement for Lowell and, equally important, seems to indicate an end to the long, tedious, and largely phony cold war between "the academics" and "the Beats." In point of fact, Robert Lowell has been recognized as a poet of repute since his *Lord Weary's Castle* was published and won for him the coveted Pulitzer Prize, but for a poet to fulfill his early promise and to gain steadily in stature and popularity is rare, especially during a period of literary conflict, questioning, and change.

Lord Weary's Castle was a powerful and, within the extremely limited precincts of the world of modern poetry, popular introduction to the new formalism which dominated American poetry for a decade following. World War II interrupted the continuity of American

poetry. It is hard, except by going through the books and anthologies of the 1930's, to remember or recapture the pre-war literary milieu, but in general the establishment was characterized by a deep concern for the social problems of the Depression, an attempt to employ the vernacular American idiom in poetry, not only for more freedom and richness and variety in language, but also in the hope of reaching out to a larger audience. The underground movement of that period was composed of the Fugitives, who cultivated journalism in verse, together with ambiguity, intellectual and personal complexity, traditionalism, and an apparently aristocratic view of the poet's function. Politically and socially they called themselves Agrarians, being so at least in their distaste for the excesses wrought by the Industrial Revolution. Regionally they were Middle Southern, and theologically they tended to be high church Episcopalians with definite affinities toward Roman Catholicism. They were academics at a time when the relationship between writers and the academics were not so cozy as they are today. Their leader was John Crowe Ransom and their special hero was T. S. Eliot in England. It is hard to realize the influence these men and women have had on American poetry and fiction. The exemplary amount of either produced by the group has been relatively small. But they wrote a great many reviews and a great deal of criticism, taking over and breathing life into quiet quarterlies, and they taught, di-

rectly and in a formal context, many of the young men who would in the years following World War II move to prominence on the literary scene. One of these was Robert Lowell.

It is possible that Lowell, at least in his early books, is the best pupil the Fugitives ever had; and they rallied around him and his work with alacrity and enthusiasm. Yet he seems an unlikely representative of the movement. Coming from a long and distinguished New England tradition, he has shown little sympathy for the South or things Southern or, indeed, interest in these things. His heritage was Puritan, yet he rebelled against it and became a convert to Catholicism, with the additional complexity that he was a conscientious objector during World War II, at a time when his new-found Church did not recognize that position as legitimate. Nor did the courts, and he was punished by imprisonment for his beliefs. This personal courage and commitment became meaningful to the poets, those who survived to write poems, who came back; and Karl Shapiro spoke for many of them when he referred to Lowell as the conscience to which other young poets returned.

There are many conflicts obvious in even this impersonal and casual view of Lowell as poet, and conflict is the essence of *Lord Weary's Castle*. His personal struggles with his heritage and the present and future of the society are reined in tightly in strict forms, strict rhythms, and solid rhymes. The effect is often the moment before an explosion, a highly dramatic moment. The verse is demanding, requiring as was the custom at the time, some notes, ambiguous, allusive, knotty, and what was then called "tough-minded." The transitions were swift and almost cinematic in abruptness. But the essence of any poetry is voice, the language and especially the verbal texture, which distinguishes the work of one poet from another. Lowell showed from the first a good ear for a wide range of language, from the straightforward cadences

of the spoken idiom to the high resonance of classical and Biblical rhetoric. The texture was as rough and rocky as the New England earth, almost anti-poetic in its hardness. There was a "tension"—a word very popular with the Fugitives who by this time were called the New Critics—between the rugged texture and the smoothness of felicitous metrics and exact rhymes.

The complexity of Lowell's imagery is vaguely reminiscent of Hart Crane, and it may be relevant that Allen Tate, who was Lowell's teacher and friend as well as a friend of Hart Crane, has written that what prevented Crane from greatness was the lack of an ordered and controlling philosophy or a belief like Roman Catholicism. Finally, it should be noted that Lowell displayed a real affinity toward the Fugitives in his strong dislike for the things of modern civilization.

With *Lord Weary's Castle*, Lowell had arrived. Four years later came *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*, described as "a collection of seven dreams, fantasies, and monologues." These were long poems, basically narrative in form, yet combining the strict formality of his earlier work in the longer forms, and sustaining and expanding the areas of interest demonstrated in the earlier book: history, his heritage, Catholicism, the classics, and the Bible. There was no diminishment of power, and the poems represent a remarkable achievement of sustained power and energy. They carried certain aspects of Lowell's technique to its limits, almost to the breaking point. This book served to consolidate his reputation, yet at the same time it raised a question: where would he go from there? Eight years later *Life Studies* appeared, surprising many with its apparent difference and new directions. During those years the American literary scene had changed somewhat. Men of Lowell's generation, most of them formalists, were now respectable in the academies. Most of them were teaching and already gifted pupils were turning out good and passable imitations

of their work. Meanwhile another group, equally academic in education and background, was rebelling. These were the so-called Beats. In one sense they represented a nostalgic return to the prewar poetry. They rejected the rules and idiom of the New Critics. They made an effort to be popular poets, to speak in the vernacular idiom, including obscenity and profanity, to and for a larger audience. They rejected Eliot and set up William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound as literary heroes. They received a great deal of publicity and they devoted a large amount of their time, effort, and their verse to attacking the "Academics." *Life Studies* came as a great relief to many poets and critics on both sides, for they all knew one another and many had been schoolmates. They wanted some form of negotiated peace, and Lowell seemed to supply the answer. The Academics were willing to listen to reason, willing to relax to keep up with the times, and the Beats were realizing that publicity and popular interest did not increase the reading audience of poetry. There remained a limited audience which would have to be shared by both. The conditions were ripe for settlement. Robert Lowell was acceptable to both sides. He had proved himself to the formalists. His passion, indignation, suffering, and the now widely-known vicissitudes of his personal life qualified him, by definition, as at least an honorary Beat.

Life Studies is a mixture of things. Part One contains a few exciting poems in his earlier manner. Part Two, entitled "9½ Revere Street" is a long, personal reminiscence in prose, a kind of short novel. Part Three is a short collection of literary sketches or snapshots, sometimes using rhyme, but more free and colloquial than anything he had done so far. The final section returns to his personal concerns, his family background and present troubles, but with a significant difference. It is now much more explicitly personal, sometimes openly confessional. The verse is often free in form.

The old tough texture and the voice is there, but the form and method seem new. Moreover, this quality of the explicit manifests itself in a direct dealing with social concerns. Lowell speaks out against racial prejudice, injustice, urban blight, and President Eisenhower. In short, *Life Studies*, while compromising none of his skill and power, manages to make a wedding of the two dominant and established modes of the period.

In the years following *Life Studies*, Lowell seems to have devoted himself to translation, to assimilation of those voices in the European tradition which interest him. His free adaptation of *Phaedra* was performed and highly praised, and in 1961 *Imitations*, a collection of his translations appeared, together with an introduction which explained his method of translation and, by implication, a part of his developed poetics. The book was intended as a special kind of European poetry anthology, exploring the dark, working against the grain, and in historical time ranging from Homer and Sappho through Boris Pasternak. It was to be called *Imitations* because, in fact, these were original poems, based on the tone and mood of the model in another language and filtered through the consciousness and sensibility of Lowell himself. It is possible that Lowell exaggerated the novelty of his method; for this kind of translation by adaptation and imitation has a long history in our language, and Lowell had already done some similar versions—"War/(After Rimbaud)," "Charles the Fifth and the Peasant/(After Valery)," "The Shako/(After Rilke)," the "Ghost/(After Sextus Propertius)," and others—in *Lord Weary's Castle*. But the significance of an entire book of these imitations, coupled with an assertive and explicit introduction, was twofold. In a personal sense it was a kind of advertisement for himself, or, perhaps better, an honest recognition that he had now achieved recognition and stature, a boldly open declaration that he was now fully a major poet. Secondly, though not

unrelated to the first effect, it was a further declaration of independence from the so-called Academic school. Some of his peers and colleagues had been translating, a bit more strictly, for some time. Among the very finest of these was Richard Wilbur whose two very accurate translations of Molière, *Le Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe*, elegantly rendered line by line and rhyme by rhyme, but always with amazing flexibility, had preceded *Phaedra* in performance. But in any case Lowell's method serves to illustrate his deliberate attempt to dissociate himself from what he believed to be a more academic approach to translation. *Imitations*, accepted on its own terms, was seen clearly as a book bound together by what was Lowell's and thus a major contribution to the canon of a major poet. The book not only was a critical success, but it also sold well, and this fact is quite unusual for a contemporary poet's work. Moreover, the earlier books were brought out again in paperback and sold widely and well. For the first time in many years a serious poet at the peak of his creative powers had managed to achieve the highest critical praise and at the same time reach a wider audience than either he or his contemporaries had ever reached before. Special as it is, *Imitations* was at once a breakthrough and a bulwark to Lowell's already secure position.

By 1965, Lowell had a double bill of plays, *The Old Glory*, successfully produced in New York and had seen published his most important collection of poems to date, *For the Union Dead*. This book, containing poems written between 1956 and 1964, is varied and dazzling in its variety. It can also be seen as exemplary of internal peacemaking, for he includes poems in the earlier, taut manner as well as poems as free in form and more so than those in *Life Studies*. In addition, he acknowledges in a "Note" at the beginning that he has gone back to recast or rewrite some of the earlier poems. There is in *For the Union Dead* not only a greater sense and appreciation

of the audience, but also a firm commitment to poetry as a responsible rhetorical dialogue with that audience. Though the same basic subjects and concerns are there, there is at the same time a greater ease, frankness, and open quality than ever before, a confidence in his place and power. The title poem, a set piece of reminiscence and association based on the St. Gaudens bronze relief of Colonel Shaw and the bell-cheeked Negro infantry he led, which had appeared as the final poem in *For the Union Dead*, becomes the key to the "new" Lowell. In the ever-present, very present conflict of racial integration and assimilation, he sides proudly, in fact vehemently for a conscientious objector, with the old New England abolitionist tradition, fire-breathing in his condemnation not only of injustice elsewhere but also in his rage and contempt for the indifference of his own townsmen.

At an age when poets of the recent past, men of great stature like Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens, were just beginning to receive the first preliminary signs of recognition, Robert Lowell has already earned as a matter of course the appellation "leader of mid-century poetry." As his audience has grown and together with it the audience for modern poetry, and as he himself has continued to grow and develop, it would seem that Robert Lowell may stand the best chance of any poet of his generation to earn and receive the laurels reserved for the truly great poets. But there are obstacles ahead. For one thing, it is possible to argue that his poems have changed very little except superficially, not half so much as his critics and he seem to believe, from the earliest poems. There are slight differences in form, but the concerns and attitudes may or may not have deepened and matured. The matter is ambiguous and debatable. Success has not always been kind to American writers. Early and sustained success tends, if history is a guide, to be unkind. The child of Fortune often ends as the slave of Fortune. In recent inter-

views as well as in the introductory notes to his last two published volumes Lowell has shown a disconcerting and dangerously self-conscious concern for ratings on what Robert Frost called "the literary stockmarket" and his place in it. It has sometimes proved a fatal mistake to try to write history in advance. Finally, now that Lowell's deep personal problems are public property, in the sense that he has made frank and explicit use of them in his poems, there is, inevitably, a genuine question in the mind of his reader as to whether or not he has or ever will over-

come some of these problems. So long as they are manageable they are subjects for poetry, but the question remains as to whether these confessional poems are therapeutic and liberating, as Lowell would seem to think, or perhaps symptomatic and ultimately inhibiting. Neither concern and hopeful wishes nor Lowell's firm belief will answer these questions. History will write its own answers in due time. Meanwhile America has a first-rate poet whose art has earned for him a place of honor and distinction.

THE POETRY OF ROETHKE

Author: Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)

Principal published works: *Open House*, 1941; *The Lost Son and Other Poems*, 1948; *Praise to the End!*, 1951; *The Waking: Poems 1933-1953*, 1953; *Words for the Wind*, 1958; *I Am! Says the Lamb*, 1961; *The Far Field*, 1964; *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*, 1966

It used to be a commonplace in discussion of the poetry of Theodore Roethke to emphasize the variety, the differences between his work as he passed through various "phases." It is true that there is variety and there are differences at every stage of his work as he matured as a poet. Now that he is gone, however, and now that it is possible to look at his work as a whole, it is surprising how much of his future work, his interests and the directions he would later explore, veins that he would later mine, is indicated in *Open House*, mostly written during the decade preceding World War II. (It is to be remembered that though Roethke was often grouped with Richard Wilbur and Robert Lowell as one of the three leading poets of his generation, he was, in fact, ten years older than both of these poets and a good deal behind them in receiving an equivalent critical recognition). It was and is easy to be deceived by the poems of *Open House*. They are short, quiet, rather plainly and strictly formal, evidently subdued and modest. Their artistry is understated, and they blithely ignore some of the critical fiats prevalent at the time. They have a kind of hewn and

carved simplicity, with minimal attention paid to the intellectual ambiguity, the forms of irony and wit, which were becoming fashionable. They make frequent and familiar use of abstractions, which had become the equivalent of dirty words to poets and critics who took their standards of judgment at second hand from Eliot and Pound. One has to imagine the effect of, for example, the second stanza of the title poem upon the conditioned reader of that period. Except for the poet's obvious use of rhetorical paradox, which was very acceptable at that time, his lines break all the rules. Few, if any critics caught in the web of time have ever been able to exercise the necessary self-transcendence to acknowledge the validity of another and different approach. It is not surprising that *Open House*, which turns out to have been the first public statement of a poet of acknowledged greatness, was largely ignored. Contemporary literary history would seem to indicate that this is the fate of all the truly important writers of the modern period. It was hard then to see the virtues of this work and altogether too easy to label it as the quiet and unas-

suming verse of an English teacher who was obviously a little too removed from the action, a little out of touch with the exciting center of the literary scene. Then, also, there was World War II whose gory clamor drowned all but the loudest voices.

The Lost Son came after the war and after the successes achieved by Robert Lowell in *Lord Weary's Castle* and Richard Wilbur in *The Beautiful Changes*. Some changes in method were immediately evident. The shorter lyric poems shied away from abstraction, coming close at times to the purity of imagism in the exact rendering of the concrete image without regard to generalized comment by the poet and, inevitably the texture seemed tougher and more conventionally antipoetic. The final stanza of "Cuttings I" is illustrative and shows as well what the poet can do by intense and precise concentration on a single, small action.

A substantial number of the shorter poems in *The Lost Son* are more explicitly personal than before, deriving directly from his experience of growing up around a greenhouse. Some of the titles tell the story: "Root Cellar," "Forcing House," "Weed Puller," "Orchids," "Moss-Gathering," "Old Florist," "Transplanting," "Child on Top of a Greenhouse," "Flower Dump," "Carnations." For the most part these poems are freer in form than the earlier poems, and when the poet does return to the strictness he had observed, as, for example, in the now widely anthologized "My Papa's Waltz," strict form is used more for humor and irony, which was, at that time, a more acceptable strategy.

With so many poets now engaged in the academic life, either patronized by or servants to the colleges, depending on one's point of view, it was almost inevitable that a genre of the academic poem would develop. As the genre has developed, it is much like the familiar Middle English poem in which the monk or scholar announces the coming of spring and bewails his fate and vocation which

requires him to sit at a desk inside with a chained manuscript while outside the world is exploding with new life. Most of our poets have tried a version of this "updated" genre, bemoaning the university's apparent isolation from "real life," and adding the modern element of criticism against a large and impersonal institution. Roethke's "Dolor" is one of the most successful and memorable of this kind, precisely because of its richness and multiplicity of things, its condensation of these things into a single evocative impression. Saul Bellow has said in talks to students that his novel *The Victim*, told exactly in the "correct" method of narration, can be considered his "Ph.D. thesis," a kind of payment to Caesar to be allowed the privilege of rendering his art as he chooses. Yet *The Victim* is a fine and in many ways original novel. Similarly it is possible to view the fine shorter poems of *The Lost Son* as demonstrable proof that Theodore Roethke could do what was expected and demanded and yet in a highly original manner.

But if Roethke paid the piper and handsomely with the shorter poems, it was the long title poem which made people sit up and take notice. "The Lost Son" was something quite new in our poetry. A long poem, in an original and independent form, it was a kind of dramatic monologue, but an interior monologue, an objectification of the nearly ineffable drama and history of the psyche and in this case of a deeply tormented and troubled psyche. Its method can best be illustrated by analogy. To an extent Roethke availed himself of the techniques of surrealism, and to an extent, like other modern painters, he used the resources of primitive arts and forms of expression to create an effect reminiscent of totem objects and cave paintings, on the work of children. But, more important, he found a logic of images, often fleeting and ghostly images to be sure but always palpable and concrete, to represent the shades and states of being far more complex than other poets had been

able to suggest when they started from the outside and evoked the inner drama by hints and clues and shards. The given setting was the mysterious landscape of consciousness with the unconscious just at the edge of the horizon, and all this spelled out in words and images. The effect was ragged, nervous, raw, a grotesque vision. The poet dared all and risked everything, moving in unknown territory, a realm with more questions than answers. Out of context, he risked the danger that in his search for meaning and articulation he would come up only with sheer gibberish. This new method showed difficulty and knotty complexity in a new form and with a new intent, by the articulation of these obscurities to bring light; a poetry which by definition trembled on the verge of madness or mysticism.

This new direction caused a considerable stir in the critical world. Roethke could no longer be labeled. If he could not be identified as a member of a "school" and if, at the same time, he was not setting a new direction for some future "school" to follow, he was undeniably an original and attention would have to be paid. "The Lost Son" was, for the poet, the beginning of one of those remarkable bursts of creative energy and inspiration which from time to time seem to come with dazzling largesse into the lives of great writers. In 1951 he published *Praise to the End!* with further and deeper explorations of this new mode, including the much praised "The Shape of the Fire," with its opening lines which shocked those as yet unfamiliar with his method.

With *Praise to the End!* and *The Waking* Roethke established for himself a place. *The Waking* earned him the Pulitzer Prize for 1953, and his literary fortunes had turned for the better. During the 1950's he became one of the most prolific and widely published of our poets, going his own way and marvelously aloof from the sweaty pseudo-struggle between the "Beats" and the

"Academics" which riddled and cluttered the literary journals and little magazines.

We have a tendency to rejoice in any success story, but at the same time the American public, including its poets, has an intense desire to classify work, to give the works of an artist a kind of brand name, as if to name a thing were to comprehend it and eventually to own it. Roethke was always much too independent of spirit to be bought and owned by prizes, recognition, or even the knowledge of personal achievement. He pushed himself restlessly to try new and different variations. At the same time that he was writing these profound and knotty psychic monologues he was writing shorter pieces in a variety of modes, delightful and meaningful children's verse and some of the finest love lyrics of our century. His talent was wide and encompassing. He could write, for children of all ages, such delightful poems as "The Cow"; he could write, with high heterosexual gusto, the now celebrated "I Knew a Woman"; and he could take a shopworn, weary form like the villanelle and make it sing as if he had made it for the first time, as in "The Waking."

No wonder that by the middle of the 1950's Theodore Roethke seemed to many of our most responsible critics and the elderly guardians of art to be the most important poet writing in English.

Words for the Wind: Collected Verse of Theodore Roethke, appearing in 1958, won the National Book Award and gave his readers a chance to view Roethke's work as a whole for the first time. It was in fact, more a selected volume than a true collected book, for he dropped and eliminated some poems, revised and rearranged others, but even so it was a volume of impressive length which few if any of his contemporaries could have equaled, running more than two hundred close-packed pages and illustrating all the variety of his past work and indicating in its concluding section of previously uncollected poems, some of the directions he was following at the time. The book

opens with the title poem from *Open House* and now only the insentient could fail to recognize how true and how prophetic, how completely stated were the quiet and rigorous lines of the first stanza of that poem. He had said what he was doing and was going to do. He had introduced himself and his subject. But no one had listened then. *Words for the Wind* gave them, to begin, a second chance.

The book brought Roethke immediate recognition. He was now fifty years old and it had taken almost twenty years for this recognition, but it had happened. Of special interest to his readers were the two long poems, "The Dying Man: In Memoriam: W. B. Yeats" and "Meditations of an Old Woman." "The Dying Man" caught the rhythms and cadences of Yeats, yet assimilated them into the manner and vocabulary of Roethke. It was more than a salute and memorial to a great poet. It demonstrated dramatically the influence of the earlier master on the younger poet and helped the reader to see a certain analogy or affinity between the two poets. Yeats, too, by his Irishness and special interests and concerns was just outside the literary scene of his own day. It was possible as well to see that Roethke, like Yeats, was more traditional, part of the grand tradition which ignores or transcends fashions if it can, than anyone had previously realized. Finally, there was a wish, a hope to be derived from this deliberate analogy. Yeats alone of the century's early masters had a career that paralleled his long life. While the others wrote less and less, if at all, standing pat on their finished work, Yeats had written some of his finest poetry as an old man, proving once and for all that maturity need not necessarily stifle lyric impulse. Roethke, after an amazing burst of creativity, had collected his poetry, but, since his powers seemed never stronger, it could be hoped that he might go on to even greater things. "Meditations of an Old Woman," a long and beautifully realized poem in five parts, offered a clue.

Here images and pieces from all the early poems, familiar motifs reappeared, but in a new guise. All the intensity of the psychic poems and much of the complexity were present, except that now, through the voice of someone else, a fully realized character, there was a difference. There was a difference, too, in the seeming clarity and logic of the poem; scales of difficulty had fallen away, perhaps partly because the reader was now familiar with the personal conventions, the signs and symbols of the poet, but even more so because the poet seemed more secure in his knowledge of their wider meanings and, thus, more able to use and to apply rhetorically what had once seemed almost incantatory. Some of his personal ease and security shows itself in his ability to focus the kind of concentrated attention upon details which would not have interested him earlier.

The final section "What Can I Tell My Bones?" takes as its theme the terror and release of dying, the fear of death and the aspiration of the caged spirit to be free. On the one hand there is the inexorable logic of the mind and on the other is the eternal cry of the spirit for deliverance. The poem ends with acceptance and affirmation, the mystical wedding of body (including the mind) and soul, a sense of the peace which passes understanding, utterly credible and, at the last, confirmed with a quiet summation which might apply as much to the poet as to his dramatic *persona*.

Ironically, the closing line of this poem, with its emphasis on finality, was to be the last statement in book form that Roethke made in his lifetime. He continued to write and publish poems in the magazines, but died suddenly in late summer of 1963, leaving his latest poems uncollected. His widow put together these last poems for publication, and *The Far Field*, appearing posthumously, was awarded the National Book Award. It is sad and perhaps pointless to speculate where Roethke might have gone had he lived. We have the book and can celebrate

what he had already done. *The Far Field* is his finest work, built on the solid foundation of all his earlier efforts. It is divided into four parts: "North American Sequence," "Love Poems," "Mixed Sequence," and "Sequence, Sometimes Metaphysical." The most impressive single piece is the long "North American Sequence," his longest poem and most ambitious. Here, in a poem as grandly designed in its own way as Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, he goes a giant step beyond the liberty of "Meditations of an Old Woman" by meditating, as poet, upon the history and meaning of his country. To this meditation he brings Roethke the poet we know with all of himself and all the baggage and burden of himself in his encounter with the staggering fact, half-dreamed and half-realized, of America. Time and study will tell to what extent the poet succeeded, but meanwhile there are obvious glories to rejoice in, such as the variation on the epic catalogue which opens Part III of the section called "The Rose."

The poems in the other sections are variations on all the forms and subjects he had worked with, never more elo-

quently realized. Everything is recapitulated. "The Abyss" is a variation on the earlier psychic mode; the love poems sing and shine as always; a poem like "Song" is suddenly and effectively in the manner of *Open House*. With *The Far Field* we see, with an inner wince of pathos, another element of Roethke's greatness: that nothing was ever lost. Perhaps he did go through stages, for all men do as they grow and learn and become; but few men manage to do so without rejecting what they were and have been. Part of our culture, the literary world places a premium on novelty. Roethke was able to come up with something new which neither offended nor isolated the old. His achievement was in part the result of the knowledge, intuitive and marvelous, which he had spent his life trying to communicate in our language and within the structure of poetry. This knowledge is at once nakedly simple and as indescribable as a veiled mystery (except in his poems), but he stated it all outright in the concluding lines of "Once More, The Round," saying that everything merges into the final unity, the "One," as we dance on and on and on.

THE POETRY OF SHAPIRO

Author: Karl Shapiro (1913-)

Principal published works: *Person, Place and Thing*, 1942; *V-Letter and Other Poems*, 1944; *Essay on Rime*, 1945; *Trial of a Poet and Other Poems*, 1947; *Poems*, 1940-1953, 1953; *Poems of a Jew*, 1958; *The Bourgeois Poet*, 1964

When Karl Shapiro published his first two volumes of poetry, *Person, Place and Thing* and *V-Letter*, he joined the generation of poets whose verse shared at least one characteristic: an overriding concern with the texture, the actual feel, of contemporary urban life. Their poetry is, finally, social rather than lyric, if such a distinction can be made. They do not so much sing of the self as speak bluntly about the society which surrounds them. They view with relatively clear and disenchanted eyes a society built upon ideals of individualism, free enterprise, and

progress in all its mechanical and political power, personal anonymity, and public conformity. The feelings and thoughts of ordinary people lie buried somewhere beneath the slogans, advertisements, and downright lies of a mass culture dominated by a faceless state. For example, the poignancy of the sound of a human voice beneath all the whirring of machinery may be discovered in Shapiro's poem "V-Letter."

Responding to the same social and political developments as the slightly older British group including Auden, Spender,

Day Lewis and MacNeice, the American poets also create no mythologies, celebrate neither a Georgian landscape nor a Golden Age of the past. These poets have given lyricism a tone of irony.

Like the others, Shapiro draws on the materials at hand for the matter of his poems: images of city and suburbia, home, crowds, drugstores, machines, human types drawn from the rigid hierarchies of a democratic society. Also, these poets are somewhat doubtful as to the sense of writing poetry at all. Poetry seems a bit like an effeminate whimper in the face of realities it can never quite express. Shapiro feels this quite strongly.

Power, raw power, is sometimes celebrated in near-lyric fashion, as in Spender's poem "The Express"; something of the same is seen in Shapiro's "Buick" and "The Gun." In all cases it is not the machine that is to blame, or frightening, but the men who made it and use it. If only men had the cold authority of steel they could survive, but the flesh is weak. For all his hard-headedness and irony, Shapiro and others of his kind have, not quite a faith or, finally, pity, but a defiant love for the weak human flesh, for the ordinary man. Ultimately that love for the downright human, the essential, brings Shapiro under the influence of a writer whose apparent callousness he once despised—D. H. Lawrence. It is Shapiro's doubt and finally his impatience with poetry as such that led him to abandon the ironic formalism of his original style and write the admixture of prose polemic and Whitmanesque verse titled *The Bourgeois Poet*. But this is to anticipate. Consider the poet's skepticism concerning poetry itself, as expressed in "Poet"; one notes that the tone is fairly bitter and scornful. Shapiro especially, who returned from the Pacific to be lionized by the literary elite, is aware of how the poet can become a cheapened type, sought not for his poetry or for himself, but because he embodies a sentiment.

It is basically Shapiro's sense of himself as a poet in the modern world which

led him first to use rhyme and meter as a technique for irony, and later to abandon that technique because it was, finally, contrived, negative, evasive, the neatness of the rhyme scheme providing a shape, a completeness, which the experience recorded does not have.

The anonymity and even gruesomeness of modern life makes it difficult for a poet to be openly lyrical. Of what shall he sing, what celebrate? Instead, he draws back even from himself, and employs the old trappings of lyric verse for ironic purposes. In "The Gun," a thing is given more sensibility than the man. In the poem, Shapiro can move toward a swinging, lyric cadence, a heightened phrasing and diction, because his subject is a gun and not himself. There is rhyme in this poem, but the long lines, among other things, prevent the rhyme from having any ironic or sarcastic effect. "The Gun" is illustrative of the plight of modern men, as Shapiro sees it. There is much guilt, but no blame; the anonymity is worse than the bloodshed. The gun, not the man, protests, cries out, is "manly." Men are seen as dehumanized integers in a cold calculus of abstractions and things. Guns, Buicks, beds, flies—all subjects of poems by Shapiro—take on an ironic human identity. Humans, in contrast, are expendable, weak, pitiable at best. In "Epitaph for John and Richard," both the pity and the ironic disenchantment are expressed. The natural order is reduced to clockwork, a mechanical process. The close rhymes, the near-doggerel cadence, assert both a sense of the maudlin and a pity which cannot be overtly stated. The events of an ordinary man's life are matter only for a bureaucratic file, anonymous statistics. Everyone takes his appointed place in a neat order. Only in *The Bourgeois Poet* does Shapiro at last speak on the side of the ordinary mortal and against the orderliness of a society he feels is superficial and life-denying.

Shapiro was born in Baltimore and educated at the University of Virginia and Johns Hopkins. He is also Jewish. The

hypocrisy and cruelty of the South is a pervasive subject for him. The South is also a subject of honest pity in much of his poetry. Shapiro's scorn for the South is matched by his pity for its being an outmoded anomaly. Beyond that, he discovers in both the figure of his father, and in the underlings, the outcasts of an aristocratic order, what he comes to value most, his faith.

The Jew, the outcast, becomes allied with men who are outcasts from society. The common man is exiled from his land, as the Jew was. Having been forsaken, the common man becomes in that very commonness, that alienation, the last bulwark against a sterile, dehumanized social order. In this light, Shapiro can even feel kinship with the Southerner.

Thus the common, substandard man becomes Shapiro's alternative to mechanization, slogan, literary pandering, privilege, and politics. In order to assert this alternative, irony and detachment give way to direct statement, outright expression. The result is, in form and content, *The Bourgeois Poet*. One can go on being ironic only so long. The old feeling that verse is effeminate posturing also remains in his poetry. In his *Essay on Rime* Shapiro had spoken of discovering a new form for poetry, a richly cadenced and suggestive prose, something like Joyce's in *Ulysses*. Whitman, too, is a forerunner.

With Joyce in mind, but even more noticeably Whitman and Lawrence, Shapiro fashioned the ninety-six sections which make up *The Bourgeois Poet*. The style of this work is, largely, a prose which is more closely patterned after spoken speech than the more formalized patterns of syntax and grammar. Images come in rich sequences; mind and imagination dart and leap, as in very excellent conversation; the utterances are given shape through the repetition of phrases and clauses. These elements of style are also characteristic of modern verse; consequently *The Bourgeois Poet* is often

called a prose-poem. Actually, it is a special kind of prose-speech. At times, as at the end of the first section, Shapiro is writing verse and using what is called syntactic prosody. The irony here is not so much one of disenchantment, distance, or self-apology, but is, rather, openly satiric and comic. The whole book is notable for its gusto, its humor, its forthright anger, and its honesty. It is also, too often, stale and derivative.

Shapiro intends to embrace experience, and to do so on the real and humdrum level of bourgeois life. He accepts its formlessness, its contradictions, its relativity of values. Echoing Lawrence, Shapiro calls for a revolt by the natural man who is instinctual, honest, many-sided.

Though Shapiro will not dabble in mythology, his primitivism is an analogous attempt to discover and revivify the essential roots of life, the dried radicals buried beneath the modern society in its conformity and superficiality. He and T. S. Eliot share an aversion to that society, to the misleading Liberal-Rationalistic dogmas of Progress, Individualism, and Perfectability. But whereas Eliot counters with an austere and traditional conception of culture based on the authority of the Church and a conviction of Original Sin, Shapiro is directly opposed in urging the natural, the common, even the unregenerate: Humor vs. intellectual austerity; Apeneck Sweeney vs. The Fisher King. Shapiro's very human (as opposed to theological) views on Original Sin are expressed in a series of poems entitled "Adam and Eve." Their sin produces our world, which is preferred over a mythical paradise.

Shapiro's poet has a comic sense of his own weaknesses, and the ability to reveal them as well as lash out with comic invective at whatever he finds dishonest, posturing, or antihuman. He sometimes resembles Saul Bellow in upholding the unreclaimed, damned, and abidingly human man, the animal with a bothersome but ever-functioning conscience. Shapiro's love for the ordinary man is such

that the sophistication of art becomes perverse and debilitating. Irreverent, bawdy, funny, serious, Shapiro identifies accepted poetry with what has happened

to too many people. In rebellion, he makes of himself a sort of latter-day Whitman.

THE POETRY OF SIDNEY

Author: Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

Principal published works: *Arcadia*, 1590; *Astrophel and Stella*, 1591; *Certain Sonnets*, 1598

During the middle of the sixteenth century English poetry was, almost without exception, mediocre. Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, had succeeded in bringing some continental polish and new Renaissance ideas into their works, composed during the last years of Henry VIII, but their efforts did not really bear fruit until Edmund Spenser published *The Shepheardes Calendar* in 1579 and Sir Philip Sidney began to circulate his pastorals, sonnets, and songs at about the same time. The metrical variety and the rich Renaissance imagery in the works of these two poets opened new doors for aspiring English writers.

Spenser's contributions to English literature have been widely recognized, but Sidney's influence has been less accurately assessed, in spite of his tremendous popularity in his own time. In a sense the reputation of Sidney the ideal courtier has tended to overshadow that of Sidney the poet, who is remembered chiefly for selected sonnets from *Astrophel and Stella* and for a handful of lyrics. The fine Oxford edition of his poetry, edited by W. A. Ringler and published in 1962, sheds new light on the genius of the young courtier, who died of a battle wound at the age of thirty-one. In moments of leisure in his active career as diplomat and soldier Sidney composed a substantial volume of poetry. Only a few lyrics were published before his death in 1586, but his work was widely circulated in manuscript and his reputation as a poet was high.

Sidney received a standard classical education at the Shrewsbury School and

at Oxford, but his years of study and travel on the Continent probably had an even greater effect on his work. The experiments in rhyme and meter of sixteenth century French poets, who were especially interested in recapturing the techniques of the Greek and Roman writers, the beauty of cadence and imagery in the sonnets of the great fourteenth century Florentine, Petrarch, and his disciples, and the courtly tone of French and Italian Renaissance poetry almost certainly inspired Sidney to strive for similar elegance in his own language. Sidney, even more than Spenser, was a European poet; the native medieval tradition of Chaucer and his contemporaries that played a considerable part in the development of Spenser's genius seems to have had much less effect on Sidney.

Among the earliest of Sidney's poems to be widely circulated were lyrics from his charming pastoral entertainment, the *Lady of May*, presented for Queen Elizabeth at Wanstead, home of the poet's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, in 1578. The verse portions of the masque included compliments to the queen and a song contest, in the best tradition of Virgilian pastoral, between a forester and a shepherd:

Come *Espilus*, come now declare thy
skill,
Shew how thou canst deserve so brave
desire,
Warne well thy wits, if thou wilt win
her will,
For water cold did never promise fire:
Great sure is she, on whom our hopes
do live,

Greater is she who must the judgement give.

Many of Sidney's poems were composed as part of his pastoral romance, the *Arcadia*. A number of lyrics appeared in the body of the narrative, and the five books of the original version of the work were separated by groups of eclogues related to the general themes of the story: unrequited love, the conflict between reason and passion, marriage, and the sorrows of age and death. The poems were spoken or sung by both the noble characters and the rustics; the shepherds' songs include amusing parodies of courtly verses. Alethes' song of Mopsa in the first book satirizes the conventional catalogue of the beauties of an adored lady:

Her forehead jacinth like, her cheekies
of opall hue,
Her twinkling eies bedeckt with pearl,
her lips of saphir blew.

Sidney had a fine dramatic sense that enabled him to capture the intense inner conflicts of his characters in many of his lyrics. The tormented queen, Gynecia, laments:

Like those sicke folkes, in whome
strange humors flowe,
Can taste no sweetes, the sour only
please:
So to my minde, while passions daylie
growe,
Whose fyrie chaines, upon his free-
dome seaze,
Joie's strangers seeme, I cannot bide
their showe,
Nor brooke outghte els but well ac-
quainted woe.
Bitter grieffe tastes me best, paine is
my ease,
Sicke to the death, still loving my
disease.

The heroes of the *Arcadia*, Pyrocles and Musidorus, traditional Renaissance courtier-poets, express their feelings in highly complicated sonnets, in which Sidney explores the possibilities of different and demanding rhyme schemes, intricately balanced lines, and ingenious

paradoxes. Musidorus pays tribute to his beloved Pamela in a sonnet that employs only two rhymes throughout, a technical *tour de force*:

Locke up, faire lids, the treasures of my
harte:
Preserve those beames, this age's onely
lighte:
To her sweete sense, sweete sleepe,
some ease imparte,
Her sence too weake to beare her
spirit's mighte.
And while O sleepe thou closest up her
sight,
(Her sight where love did forge his
fayrest darte)
O harbour all her partes in easeful
plighte:
Let no strange dreme make her fayre
body starte.
But yet O dream, if thou wilt not de-
parte
In this rare subject from my common
right:
But wilt thy self in such a seate de-
lighte,
Then take my shape, and play a lover's
parte:
Kisse her from me, and say unto her
spirite,
Till her eyes shine, I live in darkest
night.

The four groups of eclogues dividing the books of the *Arcadia* are a remarkable demonstration of the breadth of Sidney's imagination and the range of his technical skill. He employs a number of different verse forms, even within a single poem, and experiments with various line lengths and stanza forms, borrowing complicated meters from the French and the Italians; he evidently enjoyed setting difficult technical problems for himself.

While most of the pastoral poems were written in conventional accentual verse, Sidney tried in several to reproduce the quantitative meters of classical poetry, in which the length of syllables, rather than accent, was the basis of the poetic line. On occasion Sidney's adherence to classical rules produced lines that were nearer bad prose than good poetry, but he was in general more successful than

might be expected. Dorus' song in the second group of eclogues, written in Horatian Asclepiads, a complicated pattern of short and long sounds in a twelve-syllable line, has a pleasant, stately rhythm:

O sweet woods the delight of solitarines!
O how much I do like your solitarines!
Where man's mind hath a freed consideration
Of goodness to receive lovely direction.
Where senses do behold th' order of
heav'nly hosts,
And wise thoughts do behold what the
creator is:
Contemplation here holdeth his only
seate:
Bounded with no limits, borne with a
wing of hope
Clymes even unto the starres, Nature is
under it.

The subjects and tone of the eclogues are as varied as their verse forms. There are love laments, philosophical musings, elegies, an epithalamion, and several comic pieces. The songs of the shepherds, who speak a simple, commonplace language without the archaic diction of Spenser's rustics, are often entertaining. One of the best is a comic imitation of Virgil's third eclogue, a song contest between two impudent young shepherds. Sidney, like Virgil, begins with an amusing interchange of insults, then descends to broad humor as the youths set prizes for their contest and Nico speaks:

Content: but I will lay a wager here-
unto,
That profit may ensue to him that best
can do.
I have (and long shall have) a white
great nimble cat,
A king upon a mouse, a strong foe to
a rat,
Fine eares, long taile he hath, with
Lion's curbed clawe,
Which oft he lifteth up, and stayes
his lifted pawe.

In a more serious vein are the songs of Philisides, who represents Sidney himself. He appears in each of the groups of

eclogues, meditating upon his unrequited love for Mira and lamenting the human condition in general in a song taught him, he says, by old Languet, the French Protestant who accompanied Sidney on his European trip in 1573 and 1574.

While the poems in the *Arcadia* show the greatest range of Sidney's poetic gifts, his best works are in his *Astrophel and Stella*, the first of many English sonnet sequences. Sidney used the Italian sonnet form throughout, but he borrowed the English practice, initiated by Wyatt and Surrey, of ending with a rhymed couplet. His use of classical imagery reveals further his indebtedness to French and Italian poets of his day, but his clear, straightforward language gives his poems a distinctly personal quality that lifts them far above the conventional Renaissance sonnets.

Astrophel and Stella tells the story of the poet's romance, real or imaginary, with Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich; her husband's name occasioned several punning sonnets that reveal the identity of "Stella." Sidney describes the development of his love for Stella and his worship of her from a distance, then rejoices at signs that she returns his affection. His passion urges her to yield to him; his reason respects the virtue that makes her refuse and finally brings about their separation.

The sonnets do not form a continuous narrative but are rather reflections of the poet's state of mind, which is occasionally related to particular events: a tournament at court, a stolen kiss, or Stella's illness. Most often Sidney is either praising Stella's beauty and virtue with copious references to Venus and Cupid, or mourning the unhappiness of the scorned lover, Astrophel; there are also a number of sonnets about the writing of love poetry. Astrophel recommends spontaneity in writing to convince the lady of the genuineness of the poet's passion. The famous first sonnet, unusual in that it is written in hexameter, rather than pentameter, lines, states this theme:

But words came halting forth, wanting
 Invention's stay,
 Invention, Nature's child, fled step-
 dame Studie's blowes,
 And others' feete still seem'd but
 strangers in my way.
 Thus great with child to speake, and
 helpless in my throwes,
 Biting my treward pen, beating my
 selfe for spite,
 'Foole,' said my Muse to me, 'looke
 in thy heart and write.'

Even this sonnet owes something to Petrarch; naturalness and originality were conventions, too.

Sidney's simple diction contributes much to the appeal of many of his sonnets. He can capture a state of mind beautifully in poems like this often anthologized one:

With how sad steps, O Moone, thou
 climb'st the skies,
 How silently, and with how wanne a
 face,
 What, may it be that even in heav'nly
 place
 That busie archer his sharp arrowes
 tries?
 Sure, if that long with *Love* acquainted
 eyes
 Can judge of *Love*, thou feel'st a
 Lover's case;
 I reade it in thy looks, thy languisht
 grace,
 To me that feeles the like, thy state
 descries.
 Then ev'n of fellowship, O Moone,
 tell me
 Is constant *Love* deem'd there but want
 of wit?
 Are Beauties there as proud as here they
 be?
 Do they above love to be lov'd, and yet
 Those Lovers scorn whom that *Love*
 doth possesse?
 Do they call *Vertue* there ungrateful-
 nesse?

Sidney frequently inserts bits of dialogue or rhetorical questions for dramatic effect; he complains that court ladies do not take his love seriously because he does not flaunt it:

The courtly Nymphs, acquainted with
 the mone
 Of them, who in their lips *Love's*
 stander beare;
 'What he?' say they of me, 'now I
 dare sweare,
 He cannot love: no, no, let him alone.'

Although sonnets make up the major part of *Astrophel and Stella*, Sidney inserted several songs that carry forward his action. These lyrics were written in various meters and among them are what seem to be the first trochaic stanzas in English. One of the finest poems in this new form is the fourth song, beginning:

Onely joy, now here you are,
 Fit to heare and ease my care:
 Let my whispering voyce obtaine,
 Sweete reward for sharpest paine:
 Take me to thee, and thee to me,
 'No, no, no, no, my Deare, let be.'

Another opens with that fresh appreciation of nature that is so characteristic of the best Elizabethan poetry:

In a grove most rich of shade,
 Where birds wanton musicke made,
 May then yong his pide weedes show-
 ing,
 New perfumed with flowers fresh grow-
 ing,

Astrophil with *Stella* sweete,
 Did for mutual comfort meete,
 Both within themselves oppressed,
 But each in the other blessed.

Sidney left a number of works not included in the *Arcadia* or in *Astrophel and Stella*. One of his finest sonnets, often mistakenly associated with the sonnet sequence, is the familiar rejection of love, which opens with the famous lines:

Leave me O *Love*, which reachest but
 to dust,
 And thou my mind aspire to higher
 things:
 Grow rich in that which never taketh
 rust:

Whatever fades, but fading pleasure
brings.

Another remarkable demonstration of Sidney's technical skill is his collection of metrical versions of the first forty-three psalms, each in a different stanza form. He modeled his translations upon the French Protestant psalter of Clément Marot and Theodore Beza, attempting to improve on the popular, but unpoetic, English translations of Sternhold and Hopkins. The quality of Sidney's versions is uneven, but he often succeeded in bringing out the majesty of the Biblical passages:

All, all my trust, Lord, I have put in
Thee.

Never therefore let me confounded be,
But save me, save me in Thy right-
eousness,

Bow down thine ear to heare how much
I need,

Deliver me, deliver me in speed,

Be my strong rock, be Thou my
forteress.

It is difficult to estimate the significance of Sidney's contribution to the development of English poetry. He demonstrated the flexibility, beauty, and elegance of the English language without distorting it with obscure or archaic diction, and he conveyed in his poetry the idealism and the sense of beauty that filled contemporary French and Italian literature. He wrote in his *Defence of Poesie*: "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden." This, perhaps, was Sidney's own gift to his nation's literature—the creation of a new and beautiful world of poetry that inspired other writers to enter it.

THE POETRY OF SKELTON

Author: John Skelton (c. 1460-1529)

Principal published work: *The Pithy, Pleasant and Profitable Works of Master Skelton, Poet Laureate*, 1568

To place John Skelton in some convenient niche of literary history is difficult, but it is even more difficult to find an appropriate artistic designation for this early Tudor poet. Nearer in time to the writing of Wyatt or Surrey, he is much closer in style to the writing of the Medieval Latinists. Though the first mention of Skelton comes in Caxton's preface to Eneydos, calling him a "humanist scholar," Skelton and the humanists did not have much in common and even indulged in some feuding. While the humanists were reviving an interest in the classical Greek and Latin writers and using them for examples, Skelton continued to copy the style of fourteenth and fifteenth century writers.

The most obvious example of the copying is "The Bouge of Court," which is

typical of the medieval tradition in several ways. It uses rhyme royal to tell a dream allegory; it relies heavily on personification and the use of court terms; and it has the usual astronomical opening and closing apology.

The prologue begins with allusions to the sun, the moon, and to Mars. The narrator wishes he could write, but being warned by Ignorance not to try, he lies down and dreams of going aboard a ship, "The Bouge of Court," which is owned by Sans Peer and captained by Fortune. The narrator, who reveals that he is called Drede, is first accosted and frightened by Danger, the chief gentlewoman of Sans Peer. Before Drede can flee, he is soothed by Desire, who persuades him to stay aboard.

After this introduction comes the main

body of the poem, which consists of conversation between Drede and seven of the passengers, Skelton's representations of the seven deadly sins. Drede first describes the approaching figure in unforgettable detail; then, as the figure speaks, an even sharper focus of his personality is achieved. The seven passengers are named "Favel" or Flattery, Suspect, Harvy Hafter, Disdain, Riot, Dissimulation, and Deceit.

Harvy Hafter is Skelton's most colorful creation in the poem, and he is still around:

But as I stood musing in my mind,
Harvy Hafter came leaping, light as
lynde.

Upon his breast he bare a versing-box,
His throat was clear, and lustily could
fayne.

Methought his gown was all furred
with fox,

And ever he sang, 'Sith I am nothing
plain . . .'

To keep him from picking it was a
great pain:

He gazed on me with goatish beard;

Whan I looked on him, my purse was
half afeard.

Thus Harvy Hafter is the typical confidence man, always gay and optimistic, always ready to dispel all doubts and fears with pat answers and stale jokes.

After talking with these seven characters, Drede fears for his life and jumps overboard. The leap and landing awaken him, and he seizes his pen and records his dream. In the final stanza, his apology, he states that what he has recorded is only a dream, but sometimes even dreams contain truth.

I would therewith no man were mis-
content,

Beseeching you that shall it see or read
In every point to be indifferent,
Sith all in substance of slumbring cloth
proceed.

I will not say it is matter indeed,
But yet oft-tyme such dreams be found
true.

Now construe ye what is the residuel

Though this poem is typical of the medieval tradition, its importance lies in how it deviates from the tradition: this is Skelton's contribution. His characters are certainly types, as in a dream allegory they must be; but they are more than the mere pictured figures of medieval writing. They are highly individualized characters, as shown by Harvy Hafter's description, and they are characterized not only by description but also by their own speech. Furthermore, Skelton's setting is more concrete than is usual in the medieval tradition.

The allegory depicts the life at court as Skelton saw it. The highest achievement of the courtier was to be recognized by the king and to maintain his favor, no matter what the means. Those who attained his favor were openly praised but privately scorned and envied by the others. Thus, if one succeeded, he failed to maintain the true friendship of his fellow courtiers, for flattery, jealousy, disdain, suspicion and other feelings all joined forces to destroy such friendship. To Skelton, the irony of such a life was that gaining the attention of the king was accomplished purely by chance. Since this kind of court life was demeaning to the dignity of man as Skelton saw it, he attacked it.

Another of Skelton's early poems which shows the poet still working in the medieval tradition is "Philip Sparrow." Following a medieval point of view, Skelton wrote this poem in the short-lined couplets, tercets, and quatrains now known as Skeltonic verse. This poem is Skelton's most playful and most popular work; in it we see the poet in a mood in which he has cast dignity and restraint aside and has indulged himself in a bit of fantasy. He evokes both tears and laughter from the reader as he describes the activities of the bird, its death, its funeral, and as he describes the owner or mistress, Jane Scroop. It is a long and rather loose poem which can be broken into three distinct parts.

The first part, which takes over half of

the 1,382 lines in the poem, is a dramatic monologue with Jane Scroop as narrator telling of her Philip. Through her Skelton gives the reader his appraisal of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, and also uses the opportunity to display his wide reading in Greek and Latin. He parodies the funeral mass by having the whole host of birds chant over the dead body of Philip Sparrow. But the most delightful lines are those in which Jane talks of her pet:

It had a velvet cap,
And would sit upon my lap,
And seek after small wormes,
And sometimes white bread-crumbes;
And many times and oft
Between my breastes soft
It woulde lie and rest;
It was proper and prest.

Sometime he would gasp
When he saw a wasp;
A fly or a gnat,
He would fly at that;
And prettily would he pant
When he saw an ant.
Lord, how he would pry
After the butterfly!

In the second part of the poem, "The Commendacione," Skelton commends and defends Jane Scroop as the composer of the first section. He also spends much time reporting "the goodly sort/Of her features clear," and ends each section of the "Commendacione" with a refrain:

For this most goodly floure,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue:

The third part, the "Addition," was obviously added after the other two had been written and was an answer to the critics of the poem and a protest against their criticism.

"The Tunning of Elinour Rummung," more than all the other poems together, has earned for Skelton the title of "scurri-lous" or, as from Alexander Pope, "beastly." It is Skelton's most notorious

work. The first part of the poem introduces the hostess, Elinour. Then follow seven sections of various scenes in the tavern. This study of Tudor low-life is extremely realistic. To show the stench and squalor of the bar, Skelton eliminates no details, no matter how crude or coarse. Yet, there is a vitality in the realism of the scene, and the impression—no matter how unpleasant it may be to some, though to others it may be only humorous—is an unforgettable one. For example:

Maud Ruggy thither skippeð:
She was ugly hipped,
And ugly thick lipped,
Like an onion sided,
Like tan leather hidid.
She had her so guided
Between the cup and the wall
That she was there withal
Into a palsy fall;
With that her head shakéd,
And her handes quakéd,
One's head would have achéd
To see her naked.

But even Skelton feels he has gone too far in his description of the tawdry existence:

I have written too much
Of this mad mumming
Of Elinour Rummung.

Like many others after him, Skelton excuses himself for his descent by saying that he has written the poem to show others how to escape from such a fall. Yet the gusto of the representation shows a familiarity with the subject that is unexpected in such a scholar and churchman.

Perhaps Skelton's most puzzling work is "Speak, Parrot." There are several reasons for the vagueness of the poem which has led to an appellation "unintelligible." In the first place, there is strong evidence to suggest that the work is a collection of many poems written at various times. Although some of the poems are even dated, the method Skelton used to date them is not conventional, so that any attempt to decipher these dates is mostly

guesswork. Another reason for the vagueness is that Skelton feels that to protect himself from charges of treason he must veil his allusions to topical incidents in allegorical language, and he uses the Book of Judges for many terms of this language. Present knowledge of particular events of the day also cloud an intelligible interpretation. Finally, the device Skelton uses as framework for "Speak, Parrot" compounds the vagueness. He puts the whole narration into the mouth of a parrot that relates the poem in no particular chronological sequence, and at times the parrot speaks only gibberish.

In this poem Skelton still relies on the medieval use of allegory and the verse form is basically rhyme royal. But he is much farther from the medieval tradition here than he was in "The Bouge of Court." Since Skelton went to such pains to conceal his message, his targets must have been powerful and the events well known; and the members of the court probably had little trouble understanding just what Skelton was about. Still, by having the parrot speak, he was able to deny any treasonous charges.

With the writing of "Colin Clout" comes Skelton's complete severance from the medieval tradition. He has abandoned the dream structures for one narrator, personification and allegory for direct statement, and rhyme royal for Skeltonic verse. His use of Colin Clout as narrator is fortunate, for Colin simply repeats what he hears during his travels:

Thus I, Colin Clout,
As I go about,
And wandering as I walk
I hear the people talk.

Thus he cannot vouch for the truthfulness of what he hears, nor can he be blamed for his crudeness. This flexible framework also allows him to repeat in any order what he has heard, and this order, or lack of it, is sometimes frustrating.

One of Skelton's attacks in the poem is against the conflict between church and

state. He is fighting for the church but, like Erasmus, from a humanistic viewpoint. He argues that the church should be independent, not parasitic on the state; that the selling of salvation leads to total disorganization of the church; and that the clergy are ignorant, mainly because of the careless selection of priests. All of this leads the laity to distrust the clergy. Again, like Erasmus, he is calling upon the church to cleanse itself, to carry out reform from within. He is not calling for a change in doctrine, but rather asks that the old doctrines be more closely followed. His bitterness is directed against those who are defiling the sacraments of the church, and those who allow this defiling. Thus the focus of the attack is Cardinal Wolsey, who, in Skelton's opinion, is the epitome of sacrificing the interests of the church to those of the state. The power of the poem lies not in the bitterness of the invective, but in the appeals for reform which, coming from England's most prominent writer of the time, also a powerful churchman, do carry some weight.

"Why Come Ye Not to Court?" is Skelton's third and most direct indictment against Wolsey. Like "Speak, Parrot" and "Colin Clout," this poem lacks any basic organization, and the lines tumble one upon another with a seeming lack of order. Also, there is no chronological order to the events referred to. This loose structure might lead one to assume that the poem was composed at various times.

In this poem Skelton does not use allegorical language or Biblical terms to describe Wolsey but speaks of him plainly as the Cardinal or "red hat." Because the Cardinal is in complete control of the kingdom, the situation is bad because Wolsey is concerned only with money and lavish living:

We have cast up our war,
And made a worthy truce
With, 'Cup, level suse!
Our money madly lent,
and more madly spent:

.
 With crowns of gold emblazéd
 They make him so amazéd
 And his eyen so dazéd
 That he ne see can
 To know God nor man!

.
Why come ye not to court?
 To which court?
 To the kingés court,
 Or to Hampton Court?
Nay, to the kingés court.
 The kingés court
 Should have the excellence,
 But Hampton Court
 Hath the prééminence. . . .

One of Skelton's last poems, and one of his longest, is "The Garland of Laurel." Strangely enough, it is dedicated to Wolsey; therefore, some degree of reconciliation must have taken place, for Skelton died while living in the protection of the church. Once more the poet reverts to his medieval tradition of the dream allegory, using mostly rhyme royal to tell how the garland of laurel has come to be placed on his head. A long procession of poets, headed by Gower, Lydgate, and Chaucer come to Skelton. He agrees to carry on in the tradition and places the garland on his own head. As Alexander Dyce said, "The Garland of Laurel" is in one respect the most remarkable poem in all literature, for no other poet has ever written sixteen hundred lines to honor himself.

Had Skelton given more time and energy to developing his lyrical poetry, he might be better known today, for he did have a definite gift for shaping verse. However, we have only a few poems as evidence; unfortunately, Skelton did not spend much time or effort on lyrics. Some of his better ones are "Woefully arrayed," "The Manner of the World Nowadays," "Womanhood, Wanton, ye want" and "My Darling Dear, my Daisy Flower."

Skelton is not an imitator of those who went before him, nor is he a founder of any style or school to be copied by those who came after him. True, he did write in the medieval tradition, but not entirely, and he is better in those poems where he does not follow the tradition; also, he did have imitators of his style in his day, but they have made no significant contribution to literature. Thus we have the enigma of Skelton: a poet following the medieval tradition while the other scholars are heralding England's Renaissance, yet a poet creating his own particular style; a tender poet capable of the warm humor of "Philip Sparrow"; a realistic poet capable of the crude grossness of "The Tunning of Elinour Ruming"; a religious poet, loving his church yet calling for its inner reformation; a secular poet knowledgeable in the ways of the world; and most of all, a courageous poet fearless in speaking his mind and in attacking one unequaled in power.

THE POETRY OF SMART

Author: Christopher Smart (1722-1771)

Principal published works: *The Seatonian Poems*, 1750-1756; *A Song to David*, 1763; *Poems by Mr. Smart*, 1763; *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1763; *The Collected Poems of C. S.*, 1949

Christopher Smart's Seatonian poems won prizes at Cambridge University from 1750 to 1756. These poems cover the attributes of the "Supreme Being" to whom they are addressed: his Eternity, Immensity, Omniscience, Power, and Goodness. The poems are Miltonic not only in the structure of the verse but in the largeness

of vision they conjure up. The second of these in particular, "On the Innmensity of the Supreme Being," is a landmark of Miltonic adaptation. It begins with an avowal that God is best praised by that poetry which, like nature itself, acknowledges "the grand thanksgiving" of creation. Its prevailing tone is humility; the

center of the poem is God and not man. It is, in fact, a poem about human imperfection opposed to the plenitude of the created universe, and in this respect it is quite unlike the mainstream of eighteenth century poetry.

The beauty of the earth is praised for the evidence it gives of the nature of the deity. "Astonish'd into silence" the poet reflects on the variety, beauty, and multiplicity of creation, finding even in the bottom of the sea the evidence of a divine intention in

th' unplanted garden round
Of vegetable coral, sea-flow'rs gay,
And shrubs of amber from the pearl-
pav'd bottom.

Like the other Seatonian poems, this suggests that the works of civilization are far inferior to those of nature.

Smart's "Hymn to the Supreme Being" was written, as he said, to express his thanks for recovering from a dangerous illness. He begins by relating the sickness of David, a figure ever present in his mind. For Smart, David stands not only for the figure of the psalmist, but for the man who is both "the sovereign of myself and servant of the Lord." When he compares the sickness of David and his own illness, he sees that he has very little to recommend him to the special care of heaven. In going over his life he addresses himself constantly to the great themes of waste and sorrow. He finds that he has no special title to mercy, much less to divine notice, but it is his discovery of this fact which both casts him down and lifts him up. His penitence and his union with a world of sinners, which he sums up as the "contrite heart," are the whole of the defense he offers of his past life. The poem is both a thanksgiving for and praise of charity; it makes clear that the beneficiary is such only by the grace of heaven.

The figure of David is pre-eminent in Smart's "A Song to David," a poem which is both a biography and a spiritual celebration of its subject. Smart begins by

pointing out the excellences of David's character which won for him material rewards. He outlines the courage and intelligence of his hero "arm'd in gallant faith." Yet, above all other issues, and infinitely more meaningful than David's success as a warrior and a politician, is the piety of David. It is his consecration to his religion that Smart particularly admires, and the poem is in substance in praise of this. The goodness of David he explains by reference to those occasions when the king showed mercy to his enemies: "To pity, to forgive, to save." Beyond this, according to the poet, is the perpetual prayer of David, the purity of his devotion, his fasting and fear of the Lord. Whether in warfare or in the employments of peace he is the paradigm of the virtuous man and the consecrated leader.

Like Milton, Smart appreciates in David another quality, that of poetic creativity. David as king elicits the praises of Smart. David as the man of "perpetual prayer" draws his admiration, but David as the figure of the artist is perhaps even more central to the poet's vision. Smart writes of the "invention" of David, his capacity to make the form and the language of the Psalms convey the richness of his responses. He praises too the "conception" of the poet-king, or his powers of imagination. His emotional quality is last but not least, the "exaltations" that the poet, above all other men, manages to achieve and to express. David is in fact the model of the poet; he begins in contemplation and ends in creation. In this he repeats, indeed acts out, the first process of all, the creation of the world itself.

Thereafter Smart returns to the character of David, which he compiles from the stories of his reign as well as from the Psalms themselves. It is both the character of a man that is described and that of a symbol. The first of the allegorical qualities of soul that Smart attributes to David is serenity; it intimates the wish of the king for peace in his kingdom and on earth. The next of these is strength, to

persist against the great odds of a divided people and hostile external forces. Smart then writes about the constancy, joy, and wisdom of his hero, in terms which may be taken to reveal Smart's consciousness of his own tragic lack of these qualities. Writing shortly after a prolonged attack of insanity, in despair over his private and artistic life, Smart put into this poem a deep sense of the need for these qualities in life as in art.

One of the great themes of Smart's work as a whole is the appreciation of created things. This theme is explicitly connected to the idea of God as He is revealed by the things He has made. "A Song to David" leaves his first subject, the king himself, and turns to a lengthy consideration of this favorite and recurring theme. Smart himself can best convey the depth of his feelings for the plenitude of the created world:

Trees, plants, and flow'rs—of virtuous
root;
Gem yielding blossom, yielding fruit,
Choice gums and precious balm;
Bless ye the nosegay in the vale,
And with the sweetness of the gale
Enrich the thankful psalm.

The "thankful psalm" is a good description of the essential character of Smart's work as a whole. He continually seizes upon the variety, beauty and intelligibility of creation and as critics have pointed out, he does not spend as much poetic energy in contemplating his own condition as he does praising what he perceives by his senses. From this point in the poem Smart praises the world of water and that of land, that of sky and that of earth. He uses the ancient conception of the chain of being to give form to the feelings which he tries to convey: from the world of shells and fishes to that of higher life he gives an outline of the harmonic order of the universe. Very little escapes this great catalogue, not even those inanimate things at the base of the pyramid of Being. After this interlude of praise, Smart returns to his ostensible

subject, the Hebrew poet and king.

The height of the achievement of David is summarized in Smart's concept of Adoration, the act of submitting the mortal to the immortal. This concluding section of the poem is a vital link in connecting two subjects: the Hebraic tradition and the Christian. In a long and orchestral ending Smart relates the qualities of David to those of Christ, and we see the figure of the warrior and poet emerge as the forerunner of an even greater figure.

This outline would seem to indicate that Smart was almost totally involved in matters of religion; that his own religious mania succeeded, in spite of himself, in coloring all of his writing. The fact is that Smart found time to translate Horace and to provide a translation of the Roman poet of such high quality as to ensure its use even today. Translation was a very great eighteenth century craft, if not indeed an art, and Christopher Smart shows the same familiarity with the classical spirit as that shown by Alexander Pope and other masters of paraphrase. The Odes of Horace are simply and cleanly done. Perhaps their most significant contribution is the expression of classical thought in enlightenment language.

Besides his religious poetry and his translation Smart was able to work in minor veins of poetry. His poem "Of Geoffrey, His Cat" is certainly slight, but it is strong evidence of Smart's ability to observe and to deduce: we see the cat no longer with the automatic stare of everyday but as Smart does, "wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness." In many other minor poems Smart concentrates on his appreciation of the qualities of the senses: he writes about music in "On Gratitude" and celebrates the "Voice & Lyre" just as, in the religious poems, he celebrates all those things which bring beauty to life. In "An Epistle to John Sherratt, Esq." Smart writes that of all the offerings he can conceive of, none so delights the mind as

"gratitude expres'd in song." This thankfulness for the rewards of the senses is a constant theme in his work, and he relates it with equal constancy to the intention on God in creating a world full of aesthetic and moral delight. In another poem he writes that "the sweets of Evening charm the mind"—it is an expression quite un-Miltonic in language and tone, but very much related to Milton's consciousness of the nature and meaning of all things experienced by the mind.

"Every thing that grows," Smart writes in this poem, is a reminder of "superior natures" and the highest sphere of imagination. In short, his work reiterates, whether it is about figures from history or the experiences of everyday life, the constant theme of thankfulness for the variety and beauty of life. It reiterates, too, something substantially Miltonic: the conviction that all this beauty means something, that it is a key to an understanding of the nature of life itself.

THE POETRY OF SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ

Author: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695)

Principal published works: *Inundación Castálida de la única poetisa, musa décima, sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 1689; *Fama y obras póstumas del Fénix de México y Dézima Musa*, 1700

Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, a celebrated Mexican nun, was the greatest literary figure in the colonial New World, not only because of her lyrical ability but also because of her delightful personality. In the early seventeenth century there were few women in Hispanic America who could even sign their names, but with the developing culture, more and more girls received a sort of education in schools called "Amigas." However, it was only a primary education. The University of Mexico, founded in 1551, was only for boys. Girls were not believed to have any need or desire for extensive learning.

This was not true, however, of Juana Inés de Ashbaje y Ramírez de Santillana, born in San Miguel de Nepantla, Mexico, in 1651. To keep her out of mischief, her mother sent her with an older sister to one of the Amigas. There the three-year-old unblushingly told the teacher that her mother wanted her taught how to read. The teacher, at first as a joke, then amazed at Juana's quickness, taught her to read before her mother learned of the deception.

A craving for knowledge followed Juana throughout life. A few years later, having heard that cheese, of which she was very fond, stupefied the brain, the

girl stopped eating it. When she thought she was not learning grammar as rapidly as she should, she cut back her hair, vowing not to let it grow long till she conquered the subject, "since a head so naked of knowledge ought not to be adorned with pretty hair." Hearing about the university for men at the capital, she importuned her mother to let her disguise herself in men's clothes and attend classes. At the age of eight, when she finally went to Mexico City to live with her grandparents, she learned Latin in order to read all the books in their library.

Turning suddenly to the religious life, she entered the convent of Santa Teresa la Antigua at the age of sixteen, but the rigorous discipline of the order proved too strict for her frail health and she was released. In 1669 she entered the convent of San Jerónimo. She remained a member till her death.

She early discovered her versifying ability and practiced it for formal and informal occasions. The latter part of the seventeenth century in America was the Baroque Period, with poetry and even prose full of distorted syntax, Latinisms, mythological and classical allusions, and an abundance of metaphors and ridiculous conceits. This Gongorism was the re-

sult of imitation of the Spanish poet Luis de Góngora y Argote.

Because of her wide reading, Sor Juana was bound to imitate the prevailing literary fashion when she began to write. Before long, however, she found other models. Critics find the influence of the great lyric poet Garcilaso de la Vega, who wrote in the Italian style with love as his chief theme. Though limited in number, his verses achieved perfection. His thirty-eight harmonious sonnets, in which emotion mingles with beauty, established that form in Spanish verse. At times Sor Juana also followed Lupercio and Bartolomé Argensola, brothers who were among the most classic of poets.

Sor Juana experimented with every type of verse: sonnets, lyrics, ballads, *redondillas* of four line stanzas and a specific rhyme scheme, *villancicos* or rustic Christmas carols, and drama, both short *autos sacramentales* and full-length plays. She synthesized many of the poetic currents, learned and popular, Renaissance and Baroque, with even traces of mysticism. Her subject matter ran from the deeply spiritual to such humor as the *ovillejo* concerning the beauty of Lisarda.

Especially, she wrote love poems. Love versus Reason was a favorite theme. Of her sixty-five sonnets, twenty-two deal with love. Critics argue how much of her work is autobiographical and how much either the result of her observation or conformity to literary trends. There is a tradition that she had an unfortunate early love affair with the Count of Mancera. Several Mexican playwrights, José Rosas Moreno and Octavio Meza, have dramatized the story for the stage.

But was her well-known example of *Redondillas* founded on fact? It begins:

Stupid men, quick to condemn
Women wrongly for their flaws,
Never seeing you're the cause
Of all that you blame on them!

Was she talking of her own experiences when she went on?

She who's modest cannot hold
Man's esteem. We're all thought
naughty.

If we don't accept, we're haughty;
If we welcome you, we're bold.

Is that her personal pronoun in the final stanza?

Women need be strong, I find
To stay safe and keep unharmed
Since the arrogant male comes armed
With Devil, flesh, and world combined.

Her fellow countryman, Ermilo Abreu Gómez, editor of a volume of her poetry, declared that her poetic reputation rests essentially on her lyric verse, which is for the most part amorous. During her lifetime her personality so charmed everyone that she was called Mexico's Tenth Muse and everything she wrote was accepted uncritically. Before she became a nun, she was lady in waiting to the Marquesa de Mancera, wife of the Viceroy. Later after she had taken her vows, her cell in the convent became a meeting place of the leaders of Mexico's intellectual life.

Two books of her poems were published during her lifetime. The first appeared in Spain in 1689 under the title *Inundación Castálida de la única poetisa, musa décima, sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (*The Castalian Flood of the Unique Poetess, the Tenth Muse, Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz*). Three years later a second volume was published in Seville. In 1700, five years after her death, a Madrid publisher printed *Fama y obras Poetess, the Tenth Muse, Sister Juana Musa* (*Posthumous Fame and Works of the Phoenix of Mexico and the Tenth Muse*.)

What is known of her early life can be read in one of the greatest autobiographical letters in Spanish literature, *A Reply to Sor Philotea de la Cruz*, written in 1691. An acquaintance, Bishop Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, of Puebla, wrote her some admonitions under the signature of Sor Philotea, suggesting that to be holy she spend less time on worldly things and more on religious matters.

The letter brought a reply from her telling of life-long craving for knowledge, of childhood episodes, and stating that she had never written anything of her own volition, but always from outside urging, except "Primer Sueño" ("First Dream") whose subtitle declares it an imitation of the *Soledades* or *Visions* of Góngora. While much of the poem is an arabesque of interwoven images and sentences made difficult by artificial grammar, many of the thousand lines are pure poetry and show her intellectual knowledge of her art. In the *silva* meter of irregular lines, Sister Juana tells how in a dream her soul caught a glimpse of the whole of creation and in dismay returned in humility to undertake a further search for knowledge, simple and complicated, with attendant doubts and uncertainties. Apparently no one has ever put its baroque verses into an English translation.

However, a number of her sonnets appear in English form. From one of them a reader can get an idea of her style with its Gongoristic ornaments:

This trickery of paint which you perceive

With all the finest hues of art enwrought,
Which is false argument of colors taught
By subtle means the senses to deceive—
This by which foolish woman would believe
She could undo the evils years have brought
And conquering in the war against time fought
Could triumph over age, and youth retrieve—
Is all a futile ruse that she has tried,
A fragile flower tossed against the wind,
A useless bribe the power of fate to appease,
A silly effort of mistaken pride,
A base desire, and viewed in rightful mind,
Is dust, a corpse, a shade,—is less than these.

The admonitions of the bishop brought results. Sor Juana sold her private library of four thousand books, surely the largest collection in the New World, concentrated on religious work, and died four years later nursing sisters in the convent during a plague.

THE POETRY OF STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

Author: Stephen Vincent Benét (1898-1943)

First published: *Five Men and Pompey*, 1915; *Young Adventure*, 1918; *Heavens and Earth*, 1920; *The Ballad of William Sycamore*, 1923; *Tiger Joy*, 1925; *John Brown's Body*, 1928; *Ballads and Poems*, 1915-1930, 1931; *A Book of Americans* (with Rosemary Carr Benét), 1933; *Burning City*, 1936; *Western Star*, 1943

Often mentioned, along with Sandburg, Hart Crane, and Whitman, as a national bard, Stephen Vincent Benét was first and foremost a poet, his stories, novels, and propaganda pieces taking second seat. His topical patriotic pieces, his lyric poems, and some of his children's poetry have scarcely survived him, but his two narrative poems, *John Brown's Body* and *Western Star*, won for him both Pulitzer prizes and an active posterity.

His interest in history manifested itself early. At the age of seventeen he pub-

lished *Five Men and Pompey*, Browningesque monologues in a form that he often used in his later works. The ballads which followed, while winning a poetry prize at Yale, showed less promise, though one, "The Hemp" fancifully retells an incident from colonial history. The conclusion dramatized the title, indicating the rhythmic effects which became Benét's hallmark.

In his first collected edition Benét rearranged some of his early poems under the division *American Names*, the title

poem being one of his best and a preview of his expert use of place names in *John Brown's Body*. "The Ballad of William Sycamore" is a sustained attempt to present through one character a view of the American way, here the frontier life so important to national development. William Sycamore speaks of a growing nation, a growth which took from him his way of life. His father was a mountaineer and his mother was happy and brave. She bore him, as did so many other mountain women in childbirth, with only nature to comfort her in her labor. He remembers his youth, the tall, thin, brown visitors, and the barn dances. When he grew up, his father could give him only a knowledge of the land. After he married, he and his wife settled uncleared land and raised their children. His sons all died, the oldest at the Alamo, the youngest with Custer. When he died William Sycamore again felt the freedom he had known in his youth; he now slept like an old fox gone to earth, and he was again with the buffalo.

The ballad evokes our sympathy and strong feelings for the hard, wild, free growth of our nation. In "The Mountain Whippoorwill," Benét used folklore to great advantage and described an old fiddlers' contest, a practice which survives, but in this case won by young Hill-Billy Jim in what the poet subtitled "A Georgia Romance." By taking lines from singing calls and combining them with fanciful ancestry he re-creates a period and achieves effects much as Sandburg does with proverbs in *The People, Yes*.

In a very different vein, but with as great an assurance as in "The Mountain Whippoorwill," the young poet startled readers of *The Nation* with an irreverent "King David," a sophisticated ballad expressing playful disbelief. His college poems of these first collections display a normal sophomore attitude, though the lyrics are sometimes bright and original, "Memory" in particular. His Gothic themes and fantastic works were better managed in short stories than in sonnets.

To this early period belong poems later collected, love poems to Rosemary Carr, and after their marriage collaboration on *A Book of Americans*, now a standard work in children's literature. These poems celebrate not only famous but infamous figures in American history, both men and women. Much of the pleasure in these lyrics comes from the deft handling and gay daring, the unconventional though carefully patriotic praise and blame, qualities also to be found in his most famous story, "The Devil and Daniel Webster."

Burning City, prophetic poems of doom fortunately not fulfilled for New York City as Benét envisioned, vividly suggests that through war, natural causes, universal sterility, and collective madness we will fall. A modern Everyman is the narrator and the time follows World War III, though the tense is present. The most vivid poem concerns the eating away of skyscrapers by giant steel-hungry termites, while the best artistically is a monologue of the revolting machines that have taken over from nonthinking people. "Notes to Be Left in a Cornerstone" is a somewhat metaphysical poem describing the contradictory nature of New York as we know it, just before the fall that Benét brilliantly envisions. While the entire sequence is noteworthy, coming as it does after the great success of *John Brown's Body* and seven years before the publication of his posthumous *Western Star*, Benét's reputation chiefly rests on his Civil War saga.

Ironically, Stephen Vincent Benét's deep patriotism prevented his completing what might have been his greatest work, comparable even as a fragment to parts of *Leaves of Grass* and *The Bridge*. As Parry Stroud suggests in his critical biography of Benét, *Western Star* was planned to complement *John Brown's Body*, the *Odyssey* of America's westward movement as his Civil War poem had been his country's *Iliad*. He had begun the work in 1928, collected materials constantly though always postponing the

final work in order to engage in governmental and other activities. He invoked not the muses but the spirit of the pioneer as his guide.

Around representative individuals, he planned to write a poetic history in ten books for the safeguarding of national unity expressed in the continuous mobility of the people. The fragment of the poem actually written ends with his pio-

neers looking toward the West, ahead of them the endless wilderness and a guiding star.

Though criticism of Benét in his lifetime and immediately thereafter is divided, and recent evaluations often derogatory, the pendulum seems now to be swinging in his favor. His voice was clear; his meanings were immediate.

THE POETRY OF STEVENS

Author: Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

Principal published works: *Harmonium*, 1932; *Ideas of Order*, 1935; *Owl's Clover*, 1936; *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, 1937; *Parts of a World*, 1942; *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, 1942; *Esthétique du Mal*, 1945; *Transport to Summer*, 1947; *Three Academic Pieces*, 1947; *A Primitive Like an Orb*, 1948; *The Auroras of Autumn*, 1952; *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, 1954

Wallace Stevens' poetry has been called both "elegant" and "austere." It has been criticized for "an air of sumptuousness, *chic*, expensiveness, 'conspicuous consumption,'" as well as for bleakness, abstractness, a lack of personal warmth. Neither of these criticisms, however, says much about Stevens, who, according to Northrop Frye, was a rhetorician and therefore expendable, but an essential poet.

Stevens' first and perhaps most "elegant," least "austere," volume of poems, *Harmonium*, was unlike many first volumes in that it contained statements of all the major themes to appear in his later books. *Harmonium*, in other words, was a mature work, differing from the later volumes largely in manner rather than meaning. Thus, throughout Stevens' poetry, whether early or late, one observes recurrent elements: a love for precise language resulting in a selection of words at once elegant and austere; a celebration of the imagination and the power of human creativity; a highly abstract, careful examination of different theories of perception and knowledge couched in highly concrete, colorful, often playful language; and a continuing concern for

the myth-making capabilities of poetry in a world of defunct myths.

In *Ideas of Order* and *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, Stevens made a perceptible step toward austerity in statement of theme and in technique, although the themes were the same as those in *Harmonium*. Thus, the title poem of the second volume (containing also "Owl's Clover," "A Thought Revolved," and "The Men That Are Falling") consists of a series of thirty-three re-evaluations of the position of the artist and the meaning of art in a world of "things as they are," a phrase equivalent to the "*ding an sich*" of the earlier "The Comedian as the Letter C." However, instead of Crispin the Comedian's symbolic journey representing the various philosophical metamorphoses of an artist in a world of "*ding an sich*," the guitar player in the later poem plucks out various types of "fictive music" corresponding to varying definitions of poetry. Crispin moves from definition to definition in the course of his journey; the guitar player appears to pose all thirty-three variations of "things as they are" without an exact progression. As in "The Comedian as the Letter C," the guitar player is confronted by a world of fact and matter

which he transmutes—or tries to transmute—even though they are greatly changed by the player—the artist, the disciplined imagination, the passion for order—on the blue guitar. That they are changed is known; just how they are changed, and to what degree, becomes the central puzzle in a poem dealing at once with aesthetics, epistemology, and something similar to Coleridge's "poetic faith." The general conclusion is the recognition of the importance of poetry as source for "order" and meaning in a world of dazzling, jumbled, apparently purposeless objects—a world without clear meaning. Although it may be that, given the myth-making importance of poetry in a mythless world, the poet cannot entirely succeed in making fact and matter meaningful.

This is Stevens' central quandary: How can the imagination (another word for poetry) fulfill man's craving for beauty, order, and meaning in a world—depending on the point of view—antipathetic to imagination? And Stevens' answers—depending on the poem—are plural, operating as logical alternatives. Thus, at times, no problem seems to arise at all, for "the imagination" may be the only thing which is real in an imagined world. This is the possibility or alternative which gives rise to section XXV of "Blue Guitar," wherein the hero flings and twirls the world. It is, however, only one possibility, the most playful and optimistic, among thirty-three. Perhaps the simplest statement that can be made about "Blue Guitar," then, is that the basis of the poem is poetry—as it is of all of Stevens' work—"poetry" meaning human perception and creativity (one and the same) rather than words on a page.

Stevens' 1935 volume, *Ideas of Order*, contains no poems of the length of "Blue Guitar," but a number of excellent short meditative lyrics such as "Academic Discourse at Havana," "Evening Without Angels," and "The Idea of Order at Key West." Here, Stevens also asks questions

leading to an investigation of poetry. Often the form of Stevens' poems becomes a question about the nature of imagination or reality followed by an answer (always tentative or conditional) or series of answers.

Stevens' following volume, *Parts of a World*, continues his examination of poetry, as the titles of some of the poems therein indicate: "Poetry Is a Destructive Force," or, "The Poems of Our Climate." The admired, much-cited "Connoisseur of Chaos" is contained in this volume. The "connoisseur," the poet, Stevens and reader, live, perhaps, mostly in a world of disorder, rather than in the largely historical, now hard-to-come-by world which, having the advantages of "order," has also the disadvantage of dogma.

In the same year as *Parts of a World* appeared a long, difficult poem, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." Therein Stevens, in three sections, defines the qualities such a "fiction" must have: "It Must Be Abstract," "It Must Change," and "It Must Give Pleasure." These statements would be simple enough if Stevens were talking about poetry on a page. He is, however, talking about poetry and "fiction" as reality, or poetry as the perception of reality, and consequently "supreme fiction" comes to mean several analogous products of imagination: "the first idea" or "Logos," the created world, the first man, "the idea of man," and, by extension, the imaginative creation which takes place in a human mind. Hence, the qualities which Stevens defines in his three sections are not so much qualities which a poem on a page must have as they are qualities which existence must, and does, have. In "Notes," too, appears the conflict which exists between fact and matter. This conflict explains why Stevens, praising poetry, appears to say that poetry gets in our way.

Transport to Summer includes "Notes" and also "Esthétique du Mal," a poem similar to "The Comedian as the Letter C," in which a poet tries to reconcile a

comfortable philosophy or "esthetic" with "pain" and the destructiveness symbolized by Mt. Vesuvius. This comfortable philosophy, "his book," is akin to the romantic theory of the sublime and to the "esthétique du mal" nineteenth century style. We shrink from real pain, the real volcano, and the fact of death. The poet and the poem seek out an "esthétique du mal" which will not shrink or falter, but arrive face to face with "*ding an sich*" and fact and matter as they are, finding a genuine aesthetic merely in living life as it is. All comfortable philosophies and panaceas Stevens counters with "*ding an sich*."

Three Academic Pieces, containing "The Realm of Resemblance," "Someone Puts a Pineapple Together," and "Of Ideal Time and Choice," deals, as the title indicates, almost didactically, but always playfully and elegantly, with the nature of poetry. These pieces were included in the later collection of prose and verse lecture-essays, *The Necessary Angel*, wherein, with a prose style very much like his poetry, Stevens continues to examine art, the subtitle reading, "Essays on Reality and the Imagination."

The Auroras of Autumn, which won for Stevens his first National Book Award, includes, besides the title poem, "A Primitive Like an Orb" (published separately in 1948), "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," and "Things of August." If there is drama in "Ordinary Evening," or in most of Stevens's poetry, it is the drama of thought, of re-evaluation and redefinition as in "Blue Guitar." The problem, if imagination is the only reality, is solipsism.

The solution, as elsewhere, tentative, conditional, ironic, is poetry. That is, ironically, in an imagined world poetry offers reality, offers the antidote to imagination, to "romance" and "illusion" and "esthétiques du mal" which do not include all parts of the "sublime." But is poetry able to dispense with tropisms and offer only a "pure reality"? Is it not, finally, the "supreme fiction," merely the

illusion of disillusion, the ultimate and hence least real product of the imagination? If so, then reality is also the ultimate product of the imagination, and therefore poetry and reality are one—the same dream or the same fact, whatever one may wish to call it. In any case, what one imagines, what one perceives, what one is, do not depend on the implication that reality is an actuality, or on the implication that imagination produces unreality, but only on changing ideas and on facing them directly or indirectly.

The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens contains most of the poetry which appeared in his previous volumes, with the exception of "Owl's Clover," which Stevens thought unsuccessful, and two poems from *Parts of a World*, "The Woman That Had More Babies than That" and "Life on a Battleship." It also contained a long section, written when he was about seventy, called "The Rock." There, in poems such as "Not Ideas About the Thing but the Thing Itself" and "Reality Is an Activity of the Most August Imagination," Stevens continued his examinations of poetry. There are overtones of the problems of age and death, but such overtones appeared even in *Harmonium*, and a reading of Stevens from early to late reveals little change in outlook, though increasing perfection of style and language, and perhaps an increasing preference for meditative lyrics, of which "Sunday Morning" is the greatest early example. There followed *Opus Posthumous*, edited by S. F. Morse, drawing together unpublished pieces, Stevens' notebook adages, occasional lectures, and Stevens' early verse plays, "Carlos Among the Candles" and "Three Travellers Watch the Sunrise."

Stevens could write that life is composed of theories about life, and he might also have added that poetry consists of propositions about poetry. Thus Stevens no doubt sounds like the first section of "Notes": "It Must Be Abstract." But while Stevens is "abstract" and does build poetry out of "propositions," that poetry

rarely if ever has the dryness of prose philosophy, and is among the most exciting, original, and, as Northrop Frye

might say, "essential" verse of modern times.

THE POETRY OF SUCKLING

Author: Sir John Suckling (1609-1642)

Principal published works: *Fragmenta Aurea*, 1646; *Last Remains*, 1657

Sir John Suckling, like many of the other writers at the court of Charles I, was an inheritor of the poetic traditions of both John Donne and Ben Jonson, literary masters of the preceding generation. From Donne came the tone of gay cynicism that pervades Suckling's love lyrics, while the classical smoothness of Jonson's verse is reflected in the clarity, precision and easy flow of the brief stanzas of his successor. There is, however, very little of Donne's tough intellectualism in Suckling's poetry; though he occasionally develops a poem as an extended rational argument, his aim seems to have been to produce amusing, polished verses for the entertainment of Charles' court, and the revelation of his own emotions has no place in his lyrics.

Critics have pointed out Suckling's relationship to the *precieux* and the *libertins*, the court and "society" poets of Louis XIII, writers who valued spontaneity, fluency, and witty conceits in the verses they composed for the ladies who headed the popular literary salons. Their concern was, in general, with the manner, not the matter, of poetry; it would have been inconceivable for one of them to write, as Donne did, of the paradoxes of the Incarnation or of his quest for faith. Suckling's appreciation for their kind of spontaneity can be seen in his comments on both Jonson and his friend Thomas Carew in his witty survey of the literary figures of his time, "A Session of the Poets":

Tom Carew was next, but he had a fault

That would not well stand with a laureate;

His muse was hide-bound, and th' issue
of 's brain

Was seldom brought forth but with
trouble and pain.

The best known of Suckling's poems are his songs and his "sonnets," which are not sonnets in the technical sense but love lyrics in stanzaic form. Almost any one of these poems would illustrate Suckling's skill with the genre. One of the most familiar is this lyric from his *Last Remains*:

Out upon it! I have lov'd
Three whole days together;
And am like to love three more,
If it prove fair weather.

Time shall moul't away his wings,
Ere he shall discover
In the whole wide world again
Such a constant lover.

But the spite on 't is, no praise
Is due at all to me:
Love with me had made no stays,
Had it any been but she.

Had it any been but she,
And that very face,
There had been at least ere this
A dozen dozen in her place.

The abrupt colloquial opening lines are reminiscent of a number of Donne's early poems, where a similar dramatic effect captures the immediate attention and interest of the reader. Suckling's own particular talent is especially evident in the musical flow of the whole, the carefully worked out assonance and rhyme. The repetition of sound in *love*, *prove*, *discover*, *lover*, in the first two stanzas is reinforced by the smooth, slow movement

of *whole, more, moult, world* especially in the second, where the stately meter emphasizes Suckling's mock constancy. The rhythm picks up in the last two stanzas, where the poet uses shorter sounds.

The kind of wit that pervades even the sound patterns of his lyric is characteristic of Suckling's work. The reader cannot take seriously the stately stanza, whose dignified movement implies eternal fidelity, when he knows that this much-vaunted constancy is of three days' duration. Suckling has cleverly contrived in the last two stanzas to turn this demonstration of his own fickleness into a compliment to the lady who alone has beauty sufficient to hold his attention for even so short a time.

Others of Suckling's best-known poems reveal the same cynical attitude toward love and the same mastery of rhythm and sound. This familiar song from *Aglaura*, illustrates again the poet's skillful use of alliteration and assonance, as well as the effective change of tone and rhythm he can achieve in his conclusions:

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
 Prithee, why so pale?
 Will, when looking well can't move her,
 Looking ill prevail?
 Prithee, why so pale?

Quit, quit, for shame, this will not
 move,
 This cannot take her.
 If of herself she will not love,
 Nothing can make her.
 The devil take her!

Although Suckling does not make use of Donne's very involved, intricate conceits in his lyrics, he does occasionally imitate the older poet in developing a poem as an extended argument. In the five stanzas that begin "O! for some honest lover's ghost," a line that echoes Donne's "Love's Deity," Suckling moves wittily over the question of whether greater eternal felicity comes to the scorned lover or to him who was favored by his mistress. Concluding that there would be no para-

dise in watching his beloved forever embraced by the man she loved, the poet ends his poem with a typically unexpected shift in tone. Since the most the unrequited lover can hope for is that "Some bays, perchance, or myrtle bough,/For difference crowns the brow /Of those kind souls that were/The noble martyrs here," he will not look to the future:

And if that be the only odds,
 (As who can tell?) ye kinder gods,
 Give me the woman here.

Another group of poems reflect the popularity of the allegorical tradition, especially among the followers of Edmund Spenser. In these verses Suckling takes a single conceit, that courtship is like a battle, or love, a clock, and develops it at length, referring to the ineffectuality of his "cannon oaths," his "engineer" tongue that attacked by whispering sweet nothings, his strategic attempt to starve out the fortress of the heart by removing kisses and amorous looks, and, finally, his hope of deceiving his enemy by removing himself altogether. The mock battle concludes with the revelation, by some spy, that Honor is the commander of the fortress, a formidable foe with whom the lover will not contend.

Another poem in the same manner, more ambitious but less successful, partly because of its greater length, is "Love's World." Here Suckling states his subject in the first stanza:

In each man's heart that doth begin
 To love, there's ever fram'd within
 A little world, for so I found
 When first my passion reason drown'd.

He then equates the components of the universe with aspects of his own situation. His faith is the earth, quaking sometimes from jealousy; his lady, the sun; his flickering hopes, the ever-changing moon. The remainder of the poem is worked out similarly and cleverly, but this process of equations almost inevitably becomes tedious. Suckling apparently felt

this, for after comparing his lady's moods to the weather, he comes to a rather abrupt conclusion:

But soft, my Muse! the world is wide,
And all at once was not describe:
It may fall out some honest Lover
The rest hereafter will discover.

Suckling's wit is far better displayed in the rollicking iambs and anapests of "A Session of the Poets." Apollo has called all the wits of the kingdom together to bestow the laureateship on him who most deserves it, and the poets gather to plead their causes. Suckling is especially hard on Ben Jonson, to whom he devotes the most space; he satirizes the older poet's confidence in his own gifts and in what was for that time an absurd assumption, that dramatic works were true literature, worthy of preservation:

And he told them plainly he deserv'd
the Bays,
For his were called Works, where
others were but Plays.

Suckling is no kinder to his contemporaries. His criticism of the effort with which Carew composed has already been quoted. William Davenant is the butt of an old joke about his nose, deformed by his bout with the "malady of France." Suckling does not exempt even himself; he alone was not present, for he did not seek the laurel:

. . . of all men living he cared not
for't,
He loved not the Muses so well as his
sport;

And prized black eyes, or a lucky hit
At bowls, above all the Trophies of wit.

Having surveyed the whole rank of English talent, Apollo bestows his honor upon an alderman who happens to wander into the assembly, on the grounds that "it was the best sign/Of good store of wit, to have good store of coin." Suckling

concludes with a final satirical touch, hitting at the lack of aid for aspiring writers:

Only the small Poets clear'd up again,
Out of hope as 't was thought of borrowing,
But sure they were out, for he forfeits
his Crown
When he lends any Poets about the
Town.

"A Ballad upon a Wedding" presents a surprising contrast to Suckling's other works and reveals an added dimension of his talents. This poem is a rustic wedding song, a kind of parody of the classical epithalamion. It has the characteristic elements of this traditional form, a complete description of the wedding procession, the feast, the revelry, and the ceremonies attending the bedtime ritual of the couple, as well as a full account of the beauty and virtue of both the bride and the bridegroom. However, the resemblance of this poem to the epithalamia of Spenser and Donne ends with this rough outline, for Suckling wrote in a country dialect, using a colloquial rhythm and images drawn from rustic life. The bride is not described in terms of the sun, stars, or jewels:

No Grape that's kindly ripe, could be
So round, so plump, so soft as she,
Nor half so full of Juyce.

As she danced:

Her feet beneath her Petticoat,
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they fear'd the light.

Suckling had many poetic gifts, and had he not, by his own confession, owed greater allegiance to pleasure than to his muse, he might have accomplished far more than he did. As it is, he has left a body of verse which is delightful to read, a reflection of the gay, sophisticated spirit of the Caroline court at its peak, and an indication of the poet's mastery of his art.

THE POETRY OF SWIFT

Author: Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

First published: *Miscellanies*, 1708-1711; *Cadenus and Vanessa*, 1713; *On Poetry: A Rhapsody*, 1733; *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, Written by Himself*, 1739

Poetry was never the form in which Jonathan Swift's talents were exhibited at their greatest, but his incisive satirical wit made his verses a powerful political weapon and a strong defense of common sense and morality. His poetic works, as well as his prose, stand high in the ranks of Augustan writing.

Swift's first poems were floundering attempts to master the rather formless Pindaric ode popularized by Abraham Cowley, but he soon discovered that the heroic couplet gave him the control and discipline he needed to compress his ideas for the greatest satiric effect. Even the early odes, however, products of the years when Swift lived at Moor, Park as secretary to Sir William Temple, show brief flashes of the poet's characteristic, terrifyingly clear awareness of mankind's hypocrisy, folly, and vice: Describing Philosophy in the "Ode to the Athenian Society," he wrote:

More oft in Fools and Mad-mens
hands than Sages
She seems a Medley of all Ages,
With a huge Farthingale to swell her
Fustian Stuff,
A new Commode, a Top-knot, and a
Ruff,
Her Face patch't o'er with Modern
Pedantry.

By 1693, when he wrote his ode to the playwright Congreve, Swift had a clear idea of his mission as a poet:

'Twas in an evil hour to urge my hate,
My hate, whose lash just heaven has
long decreed
Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed.

The view of vice and folly as physically disgusting, as well as morally repellent, that was responsible for the creation of the Yahoos in *Gulliver's Travels* is also evident in the Congreve poem. The muse

Sham'd and amaz'd beholds the chat-
t'ring throng,
To think what cattle she has got
among;
But with the odious smell and sight
annoy'd,
In haste she does th' offensive herd
avoid.

Swift had found his true poetic voice in the couplets of the ode to Congreve, and he forced himself to even greater brevity and conciseness in many of his later poems by using a tetrameter rather than a pentameter line and speeding up his rhythm with the occasional use of trochaic feet. Both the brevity and the rhyme of his favorite verse forms lent themselves to the effective juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane, the serious and the trivial, the moral and the immoral in his satires. Typical of his experimentation with this juxtaposition is "Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table Book," where he notes:

Here you may read (Dear Charming
Saint)
Beneath (A new Receipt for Paint)

Here (lovely Nymph pronounce my
doom)
There (A safe way to use Perfume).

Much of Swift's poetry was occasioned by particular events, especially those on the political scene. He often attacked, sometimes bitterly, sometimes humorously, public figures who had aroused his enmity, his contempt, or his amusement. Lord Berkeley, Lord Justice of Swift's native Ireland from 1699 to 1707, was an early target; the poet ridiculed his stupidity and his dependence upon his secretary. The poet-architect John Vanbrugh fared worse than Berkeley as Swift attacked his grandiose building plans and

his aspirations to be a dramatist in "Vanbrugh's House":

The Building, as the Poet Writ,
Rose in proportion to his Wit:
And first the Prologue built a Wall
So wide as to encompass all.
The Scene, a Wood, produc'd no more
Than a few Scrubby Trees before.
The Plot as yet lay deep, and so
A cellar next was dug below:
But this a Work so hard was found,
Two Acts it cost him under Ground.

The bursting of the "South Sea Bubble," the economic crisis which followed wild speculative investing in a proposed trading venture, called forth more ridicule from the prophet of common sense. Here, as in his prose, Swift points out the essential absurdity of the scheme by giving physical form to an abstract concept, that of multiplying one's investment ten times:

Ye wise Philosophers explain
What Magic makes our Money rise
When dropped into the Southern main,
Or do these Juglers cheat our Eyes?

Put in Your Money fairly told;
Presto be gone—'Tis here again,
Ladies and Gentlemen, behold
Here's ev'ry Piece as big as ten.

The poet's concern for Ireland and his fury at the exploitation of her people and her lands by the English inspired many of his most powerful poems. In an epilogue to a benefit production of *Hamlet* he pleaded with the English audience to use Irish wool to help alleviate the dire poverty of the Irish weavers. During the 1720's Swift used his verse, as well as the impassioned prose of *The Drapier Letters*, to defend his country's economy from "Wood's halfpence," English-made copper coins which the government of Robert Walpole planned to circulate in Ireland. Swift and other patriots feared the debasing of their currency, and the poet directed a number of attacks at William Wood, the man who was said to be preparing to make his fortune by manu-

facturing the coins. Typical of his vilification of Wood are these lines from "Wood, an Insect":

By long Observation I have understood,
That three little Vermin are kin to
Will. Wood:
The first is an Insect they call a Wood-
Louse,
That folds up itself in itself for a
House:
As round as a Ball without Head
without Tail,
Inclos'd *Cap-a-pee* in a strong Coat of
Mail.
And thus William Wood to my Fancy
appears
In Fillets of Brass roll'd up to his Ears:
And, over these Fillets he wisely has
thrown,
To keep out of Danger, a Doublet of
Stone.

The last line of this passage refers to the fact that Wood was in debtors' prison.

Perhaps the harshest of the Irish poems is one of Swift's last works, the "Legion Club," a bitter attack on the Irish Parliament, which is described as a madhouse. The poem is filled with the ugly scatological imagery that characterizes the poet's darkest moods:

Let a royal grant be pass'd,
That the Club have Right to dwell,
Each within his proper Cell;
With a Passage left to creep in,
And a Hole above for peeping.

Let them, when they once get in
Sell the Nation for a Pin;
While they sit a picking Straws
Let them rave of making Laws;
While they never hold their Tongue,
Let them dabble in their Dung;
Let them form a grand Committee,
How to plague and starve the City.

General condemnation of the whole legislative body is combined with attacks on specific members for their incompetence and immorality.

Swift, like his friend and fellow poet, Alexander Pope, felt that his function as a satirist extended beyond the correction of particular evils on the political scene

and much of his poetry deals with the evils of social customs and of human nature in general. Inevitably, this part of his work has a wider appeal than that which is closely tied to a particular contemporary situation.

A number of poems satirize, sometimes mildly, sometimes harshly, the foibles of women. "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind" ridicules feminine practices of scandal-mongering, carrying on illogical arguments, and exercising wily deceptions, usually on their husbands. There is an underlying sense of disgust in "The Progress of Beauty," in which Swift describes the hideous appearance of popular belles as they arise in the morning, without the hairpieces and other artificial aids that contribute to their charms, still wearing the remnants of yesterday's makeup. One of the qualities Swift criticizes throughout his work is artificiality, a discrepancy between appearance and reality, and he finds that beauty which rests entirely upon paint to be in some sense morally evil, as well as distasteful or ridiculous.

A lighter, more amusing piece is "The Journal of a Modern Lady," the description of the activities of a woman of fashion from the moment she awakes, aching and bleary-eyed, at noon, lamenting her losses at the card table the night before. At dinner she torments her husband's guests with her sharp tongue, while he wonders at her wit; then she joins her gossiping friends for tea:

Now Voices over Voices rise;
While each to be the loudest vies,
They contradict, affirm, dispute,
No single Tongue one Moment mute;
All mad to speak and none to hearken.

Swift skillfully reproduces the acid conversation over the evening's games of cards, when the lady again loses heavily:

"This morning when the Parson came,
"I said I should not win a Game.
"This odious Chair how came I stuck
in 't,
"I think I never had good Luck
in 't . . .

"Nay, Madam, give me leave to say
" 'Twas you that threw the Game away;
"When Lady Tricky play'd a four,
"You took it with a Matador."

The game ends in the early hours of the morning and Swift's heroine retires again "with empty purse and aching head."

In "Helter Skelter," a poem that rollicks along in trochaic tetrameter, Swift attacks the young Irish attorneys, whom he accuses of attending to their own pleasures at the expense of their clients' needs. The contrast between the gayety of the rhythm and rhyme and the harshness of the content is particularly effective:

Now the active young Attorneys
Briskly travel on their Journeys,
Looking big as any Giants.
On the Horses of their Clients . . .

With some Law but little Justice,
Having stolen from mine Hostess,
From the Barber and the Cutler,
Like the Soldier from the Sutler . . .
Into this and t'other County,
Living on the public Bounty.

One of the finest of Swift's satirical works directed at mankind as a whole is "The Day of Judgment," written in an iambic pentameter couplet which gives it unusual elevation and dignity. Swift's vision of the end of the world is a particularly devastating one; the pale sinners who make up the human race gather before the throne of an utterly contemptuous Jove, who finds their activities, even their sins, so meaningless and petty that he cannot be bothered to damn them:

"Offending Race of Human Kind,
By Nature, Reason, Learning, blind;
You who thro' Frailty step'd aside,
And you who never fell—thro' Pride;
You who in different Sects have
shamm'd,
And come to see each other damn'd;
(So some Folks told you, but they knew
No more of Jove's Designs than you)
The World's mad Business now is o'er,
And I resent these Pranks no more.
I to such Blockheads set my Wit!
I damn such Fools!—Go, go, you're bit."

A similar scorn for men's self-deception underlies "The Beast's Confession," in which animals are shown ignoring their vices and praising themselves for their faults; the ass confesses that he may be overfond of jesting, but praises his beautiful voice, while the swine prides himself on his shape and beauty and his hatred of sloth. Similarly, men deceive themselves as they evaluate their actions. The lawyer gives free advice to the poor and surpasses all his fellows in the speed and efficiency of his work:

The Statesman tells you with a Sneer,
His fault is to be too Sincere;
And, having no sinister Ends,
Is apt to disoblige his Friends.
The Nation's Good, his Master's Glory
Without Regard to Whig or Tory,
Were all the Schemes he had in View.

Swift concludes by commenting that his tale is false; he has libeled the animals, who never betray their natures. It is only man who deceives himself.

By no means is all of Swift's poetry so bitter and critical as the works discussed here. He and his friends frequently exchanged witty, jocular messages in verse, and he wrote a number of moving poems to his friend "Stella," Esther Johnson. One of the best of these is the lyric addressed to her on her last birthday. Swift realized that they were both growing old, and he sensed the nearness of the end of her life. His poem is an affirmation of the values of the virtuous, unselfish life:

Say, Stella, feel you no Content,
Reflecting on a Life well spent?
Your skillful Hand employ'd to save
Despairing Wretches from the Grave;
And then supporting with your Store,
Those whom you dragg'd from Death
before:
(So Providence on Mortals waits,
Preserving what it first creates).

Another revealing poem is "Cadenus and Vanessa," a thinly disguised description of Swift's relationship with Esther Vanhomrigh in the form of a classical myth. Vanessa was many years younger

than the poet, but her love for him was apparently deep, and this poem is an attempt on his part to express the nature of his feeling for her. He pictures himself as the crusty tutor to a beautiful girl who has been raised by Venus and Minerva to restore prestige to romantic love, which had fallen into disrepute. However, Venus' scheme was unsuccessful. Vanessa's natural beauty was scorned by the elegant ladies of fashion whose color came from artifice, and her wisdom made the foolish, ignorant beaux of the day shun her as a bore. Only Cadenus appreciated the virtues of her mind, but much as he was flattered by her affection, he tried to keep his own feelings platonic. The outcome of the relationship is left in doubt; Vanessa was a persuasive debater on the side of romantic love, and the poet refuses to say "whether he at last descends to like with less Seraphic ends."

One of the most popular and appealing of all Swift's poems is the "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," in which he comments with wry humor upon the natural human tendency to find something pleasing in any misfortune befalling others. Even his friends will find consolation at his death:

Poor Pope will grieve a Month; and
Gay
A week; and Arbuthnot a Day.

He imagines men discussing him at their club, recalling his defense of the Irish and his independence of the patronage of the wealthy, aspects of his life of which he was justly proud, and he concludes with this brief epitaph:

He gave the little Wealth he had,
To build a House for Fools and Mad:
And show'd by one satiric Touch,
No Nation wanted it so much:
That Kingdom he hath left his Debtor,
I wish it soon may have a Better.

Many more of Swift's poems could be cited to show those aspects of life that particularly disturbed him and to enlarge the reader's affection for the poet, who

shows himself in his more personal poems to be a warm, sympathetic man. His hatred for man's faults was prompted by his deep and passionate concern for the human race, and the permanent value of

his works lies not simply in their wit and technical brilliance, but in their power to move the reader, a power that undoubtedly derives from the poet's love for mankind and his disgust with human failings.

THE POETRY OF TATE

Author: Allen Tate (1899-)

First published: *Mr. Pope and Other Poems*, 1928; *Three Poems*, 1930; *Poems: 1928-1931*, 1932; *The Mediterranean and Other Poems*, 1936; *Selected Poems*, 1937; *The Vigil of Venus*, 1943; *Poems: 1922-1947*, 1948; *Poems*, 1960

A reader who comes across a volume of poetry by Allen Tate will probably read only a few pages before words such as "obscure" and "rigid structure" from literature survey courses make him put it back on the shelf. Tate is not, in fact, an easy poet to understand. There are four principle reasons why his poetry is not at first as engaging as that of several of his contemporaries; the heirs of our literary tradition will perhaps give these same reasons to explain why his works have survived. Certainly Tate will survive in the myth he has created; four interrelated, yet distinct, aspects of his poetry are component parts of that myth.

Tate himself has commented on the common charge that modern poetry is obscure: in his famous essay, "Tension in Poetry," he says that poetry is bound to be impenetrable and obscure if the reader does not share the poet's feeling. Tate does not, for example, share the feeling of "sentimental" poets, and therefore calls their work "obscure," even though the poems are technically very simple. One of Tate's feelings is evident in his concern with history, man's closest link with the past. He believes that history should be a matter of myth rather than patterns and systems. "The Swimmers" recalls a young boy's feelings as he saw a Negro hanged by a posse. He could not run, but watched what he felt was a matter which concerned the whole town, even though no one would acknowledge the fact. But history is more personal than statistical,

as Tate makes it in "Ode to Our Young Pro-Consuls of the Air" with its images taken from the Revolution and the Civil War. History is not as big a thing as war; it is, rather, as small as one man in a war. Or it is a man, like Tate, observing the results of war.

John Orley Allen Tate, who was born in 1899 in Kentucky, began his career through association with the Fugitives, a group of Southern writers including John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren (his professor and roommate at Vanderbilt), Andrew Lytle, and Donald Davidson. In a literary journal, *The Fugitive*, and a book, *I'll Take My Stand*, this group sought, or at least advocated, the re-establishment of the Old South in opposition to the New. Although this theme of disenchantment with the new was not unusual for the times, Tate's concern was not only for the waste and despair of one world war; his despair went back to and sought relief in the days of the Old South, which became his symbol of the lost tradition of America. Perhaps not many can share his feeling for the Old South, but an understanding of the symbols Tate has structured from his past certainly will help release him from the charge of obscurity.

Some critics feel Tate's poetry indicates that he would have been happier had he been born early enough to be a Confederate soldier in order to fight for his Old South rather than being forced to brood inactively over its death. That view

is a literal interpretation of his symbols: the Old South is merely a representative for him of the better tradition which has been replaced by the less noble, less alive, less "human" condition he sees today. "Ode to the Confederate Dead," as Donald Davidson has said, does not eulogize dead soldiers as much as Tate's dead emotion. The "modern" world of science has a nightmarish wasteland quality to men of sensitivity, as implied in "Sonnets at Christmas." In fact, when "Euthenasia" was published in 1922, Harte Crane wrote to Tate saying that he recognized an Eliot influence. Tate, however, had not yet read Eliot. The similarity in theme has been attributed to a similarity in reaction to the times. Both poets were concerned with man's inactivity, the "dry bones," the "wasteland." Both men also believed that civilization must return to religion in order to escape the death-in-life that Tate symbolized as twilight. "The Last Days of Alice" bitterly asserts that it is better to be sinners than twilight dwellers; the premise sounds very like Eliot's "The Hollow Men."

Tate's despair has also been compared with that of Edgar Allan Poe, who predicted that man was becoming dehumanized. Despite the similarity, Tate is not as bleak as Poe because he seeks to reconcile man; the major vehicle he offers us for escape from the twilight is an increased awareness of the double level of language. There is a difference, he insists in "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," between what he calls political communication used for the control of others, and the communion of language used for self-knowledge in literature. Mere communication is a symptom of mechanized society: communion includes love, and to be complete communication must also include communion. Tate's concern for poetry as a symbolic language, a possible safeguard of continuing humanity, can be seen in his translation of the "Pervigilium Veneris" ("The Vigil of Venus"). The silence of twilight, the lack of communion, lamented by the

Latin poets, is also equated with sleep in Tate's "Retroduction to American History."

Because Tate is so concerned with symbolic language as the only escape from non-existence, it is not unusual that his own poetic language is highly symbolic. To obfuscate further his early readers, his symbolic language is based on a polar ambiguity; two levels are juxtaposed with the assumption that neither can be totally correct. In an article on Tate titled "The Current of the Frozen Stream," Howard Nemerov conjectures that Tate's duality is the generating principle of his poetry. He cites a passage from "The Meaning of Life" as the key to Tate's ambiguity indicated in the polar categories of commentary and essence. Tate's poems of commentary have a theme with which they deal explicitly; they are characterized by meditation and reflection; they offer no conclusion; they are usually in blank verse. "Fragment of a Meditation" is an example. The poems which aim at "essence in itself" are organized around subtle thoughts making implicit connections; they are typically brief and concise in formal metrical schemes. "Ode to Fear" is cited as an example. His most frequent symbol for "essence" is blood, as is shown in "The Mediterranean."

Blood is liquid, hot and fluid, and is contrasted with the solid, cold, rigid symbolism of "commentary" that *cracks* the hemispheres. Blood and a cold frieze are set in opposition in "To the Romantic Traditionists":

Extending his symbols still farther, in "To the Lacedemonians," blood represents youth and life, as opposed to the rigidity of age and death.

One could surmise from Tate's preoccupation with the Old South that it represents his world of "essence"; the North represents "commentary." The continuous ambiguity in Tate is the fact that the symbols of both life and death are needed in the paradoxical polarity of his world.

Like many poets, Tate believes that

the Man of Letters has a role to play in modern civilization: poets must show the way to interpret society and how to live in it. Typical of the intricately symbolic myth he has created, Tate is a withdrawn scholar. He feels poets should not be actively engaged in politics. It is, Tate says in "To the Lacedemonians," up to poets to see that the polarity remains, that "communication" does not mechanize "communion" as well.

These major themes—history, language and religion—all combine as a major statement on the necessity of a duality in modern life which will prevent our being swallowed in mechanization. It is, therefore, perhaps ironic that Tate once described a good poem as primarily a work of craftsmanship. That Tate is a

careful craftsman is obvious in his tightly structured poems with strict metrics and rhyme. But it is equally obvious that the carefully controlled format of his poetry does not entirely control the very personal rage that slashes convention.

Tate insists on honesty; he refuses to produce a forced lyricism which pretends to be relaxed. In most of his poems he does not "strain"; he balances tight structure and an almost casual irony to voice his rage. The myth Allen Tate has created is not an easy one to crack, and it is difficult, as Marianne Moore pointed out, to admire what we do not understand. But once understood, the poetry of Tate's myth is smashing, slashing, consistently paradoxical, and consistently individual.

THE POETRY OF THOMPSON

Author: Francis Thompson (1859-1907)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1893; *Sister Poems*, 1895; *New Poems*, 1897

Francis Thompson's poetry resulted from the tortured and tormented mind of a man maladjusted to the world. The son of a successful father with whom he could have little in common, he was a failure in his studies to become a Catholic priest and later a physician. Self-exiled from home, he wandered to London, where, ground down into the direst degradation and poverty and forced to subsist on the inadequate fare he could earn by selling matches on the street, he nevertheless grew in spiritual fervor and integrity.

His first poems, growing out of a promising youth of effort, were published in April, 1888, in *Merry England*, a magazine edited by Wilfrid Meynell, who with his beautiful and talented wife Alice was to have great influence on the personal and poetical life of the poet. These early works include numerous poems about children. One of these, Thompson's first on the subject, is named "Daisy." The poem flirts with the obviously sentimental but rises above it. The

poet meets the little girl, in a Wordsworthian fashion, walks with her, like two children walking side by side. When she leaves her walking partner after a short time, he remembers the joy of their companionship and the poignancy of parting, but he reconciles himself with the thought that sadness is the price of all happiness.

Thompson's first volume of poetry, *Poems*, was well received. Spurred on by enthusiastic reviews in numerous magazines, the volume startled the Victorian audience who reacted with approval or shock. It was immediately evident that a poet of considerable power was writing. His verse form was unconventional, running from clipped lines of one word to unusually long ones. The vocabulary was exotic, even bizarre, including old forms of usual words and outlandish coined terms. Latinisms abounded. Most important of all, however, was the powerful mysticism that had energized the great works of the earlier Metaphysical poets, John Donne and Richard Crashaw. Wil-

liam Blake's influence is also immediately evident in several of the poems, as in "Little Jesus," which parallels in subject matter, treatment and rhythms the earlier poet's "The Lamb."

Thompson's second volume, *Sister Songs*, did not meet with the success of the earlier volume. Even the author held reservations about its publication. In approach and language that marks no advance over the previous volume, it catalogues Thompson's love affair—which seems to have been genuine—with the daughter of his landlord.

Another of Thompson's love affairs, entirely chaste and worshipful, is chronicled in "Love in Dian's Lap," begun the year of publication of "The Hound of Heaven." The sequence is made up of poems written about Alice Meynell, the wife of his first publisher, who was herself a poet and a beautiful and charming woman. In Thompson's mystic, powerful style she becomes far more than an earthly woman. She is his spirit, soul, his Heaven. In "A Carrier Song," the poet says that she has "waned" from him and left him in a "darkened cage." Another, "Her Portrait" reveals his approach, his power, and his reaching back to the technique of the Metaphysical poets. The poet wishes that he had the "heavenly grammar" which "angels' tongues" turn to gold. To praise her soul "All must be mystery and hieroglyph." He catalogues her beauties, ending with the statement that in the contemplation of her eyes there is "Passionless passion, wild tranquillities." In another sensuous-mystical statement, "Domus Tua," Thompson states that the perfect woman should be praised because her body is God's Temple, and he will be glad to say at Doomsday that he loved the beauty of that House.

Evidence of the fact that Thompson could never write very far from his own experience—limited as that was—nor on any subject but himself is seen in the elegy, written at the request of Wilfrid Meynell, on the death of the Cardinal of

Westminster, with whom Thompson had been loosely associated. The poem begins on the theme of the dead clergyman but almost immediately turns to the poet himself, who is contrasted in his failure with the Cardinal in his success. Thompson was "ex-Paradised" and not tall enough to lean against the Cardinal's Christ. Death, which was ever close to Thompson with his tuberculosis and intermittent addiction to opium, moves nearer here than usual, as he says in one of his simple and powerful lines that the grave is in his blood.

The wide range of Thompson's poetry is further revealed in two works quite different in subject matter and in treatment. "The Fair Inconstant" is a love poem in the same mode and treatment as Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" which ends with Shakespeare's statement that it is his poem that will eternally give life to the subject of his song. Thompson's begins with the same kind of statement, asking his love if she thinks her beauty will live after it has ceased being beautiful to him. He feels that he made her fair, his heart did tint her cheek with beauty, and she will eventually discover that he looked her "into loveliness."

Such a delicate poem is successful. "Cecil Rhodes" is in every way a failure. The poem catalogues the glories of this great man, his saving Africa for England, and finally devolves into chauvinism in its appeal for "Colonies on Colonies" to cling to the skirt of Mother England and thus be wise.

Among the various influences on Thompson, both immediate and remote, one of the most powerful was Coventry Patmore. Thompson indicates this influence in the dedication to his last volume, *New Poems*. The book will attempt to outface Time under the banner of Patmore's renown, and if it fails, then one page at least, the dedication, will survive, "armed" with his great name.

Of all Thompson's poems, none has the appeal and power of his most widely

known work, "The Hound of Heaven," completed during the poet's residence in London from 1890 to 1892, and translated into most languages of the world and generally admired. Written by a man who wanted to become a priest but was denied this way to serve God, the poem chronicles the rejected man's pell-mell flight to other consolations. He fled God "down the nights and down the days" and through the "labyrinthine ways" of his own mind. Even when assured of "His love Who followed," he continued to run for fear that God's love would exclude all other things from life. God's voice behind insisted that nowhere could the pursued find shelter except in Him. Excluded from men and women, he turned to children, but they were snatched from him. He turned to nature

but his heart was not eased. And the insistent voice asserts that nothing can content the poet that does not content God. At the end of the long flight, the "long pursuit," the poet discovers that he is so "ignoble," so worthless, that only God will love him. All the certainties of life, the rest and peace, were taken from man so that he would "seek" it in God's "arms." All rest and certainty is "stored" for man "at home." The poem ends in a glorious affirmation of faith and certitude.

Thompson's later work, after *New Poems*, consisted mostly of reviewing and criticism, which was weak and inferior. Generally, the verse he wrote was also a failure, vitiated by his weakening powers, his advanced tuberculosis, and his reliance on opium.

THE POETRY OF THOREAU

Author: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

First published: *Poems of Nature*, 1895; *Collected Poems*, 1943; *Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau*, enlarged edition, 1964

Most of Thoreau's best poetry was written between 1839-1842, though he had experimented with verse composition for several years before those years. The poems best known to the public are those which appear in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*—several had already been published in the magazine *The Dial*—and in *Walden*, his only books published before his death. Most of the remaining poems in the collected editions appear in Thoreau's voluminous *Journal*, published after his death.

Carl Bode points out in his introduction to the *Collected Poems* that Thoreau was talked about and judged as a young poet by his contemporaries; a decade before his death, however, he was forgotten as a poet, though celebrated for his remarkable prose. Bode assigns three reasons for the continued neglect of Thoreau's poems: the unevenness of his verse, Thoreau's loss of enthusiasm for poetry, and

the mistaken belief of F. D. Sanborn and others that his verses are fragments inseparable from the prose into which they were originally woven. Even such a recent biographer as Walter Harding, in *The Days of Henry Thoreau*, says that most of Thoreau's poems are third-rate. Because so many of the poems in Bode's *Collected Poems* are actual fragments or are marked by aesthetic faults, incomplete revision, or even technical errors of composition, the average reader is likely to agree with Harding. Yet in a few of Thoreau's best poems he achieves a blend of poetic beauty and skill that make these poems at least worthy of serious consideration.

Emerson said Thoreau's biography is to be found in his poems. The hyperbole is typical, but important parts of the biography are to be found there: his personal philosophy of life and his closeness to nature, his love for his brother John, his

love for Ellen Sewall and her young brother Edmund, and his concept of love itself.

The paucity of Thoreau's poetic output is explained in part in his couplet "My life has been the poem I would have writ, / But I could not both live and utter it." Like Emerson, his older friend and early inspirer, Thoreau believed in living each day to its utmost and living it in or near Concord, though he did leave several times on what he called "excursions" of varying lengths. This belief is found in the poem which begins "I seek the Present Time, / No other clime, / Life in to-day, / Not to sail another way. . . ." Poor in worldly goods but rich in his life of the spirit, Thoreau's pride in this life is seen in "Poverty." Like Wordsworth, one of his favorite poets, he stored in memory the beauty of the natural world for the pleasure and the spiritual gain of recollection at other times, as he suggests in the opening lines of "The Inward Morning": "Packed in my mind lie all the clothes / Which outward nature wears. . . ." But unlike the Wordsworth of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," who mourned the loss of life's freshness and glory by the growing youth, Thoreau was stirred to admiration and love of the mature man who, having passed through the storms of life, faces the world proudly and bravely.

Thoreau's deep love for his older brother John, who died of lockjaw at twenty-seven, is seen in the quatrain "Where'er Thou Sail'st Who Sailed with Me" and in the grief-filled lines of "Brother Where Dost Thou Dwell." Henry's brief but passionate attraction to Ellen Sewall's young brother Edmund appears in "Lately, Alas, I Knew a Gentle Boy" (titled "Sympathy" in the *Dial*). His love for Ellen is expressed in "Love" (reminiscent of John Donne) and in the gay lines of "The Breeze's Invitation." Apparently Thoreau conceived of love as necessarily coexisting with hate though rising above it, and the love-hate motif is

found in such poems as "Indeed, Indeed, I Cannot Tell" and "I Will Obey the Strictest Law of Love."

From a man who lived as close to nature as Thoreau did, one would expect to find poetic evidence of his response to the world about him. In "Within the Circuit of This Plodding Life" the poet remembers how in winter he has recalled the beauty of the world in spring or summer and he has been enriched to continue his winter's tasks. "Smoke in Winter," beginning "The sluggish smoke curls up from some deep dell," describes how the just-risen woodsman sends the smoke, his "early scout, his emissary," from his home "To feel the frosty air, inform the day. . . ." In the rhythmic "When Winter Fringes Every Bough" the ice and snow in their beauty remind the poet of summer as if it hid beneath, and the cracking of the ice on the pond hurries him to the scene to join nature in her festival mood. "Rumors from an Aeolian Harp" pictures an imagined vale of beauty, love, youth, and virtue which is contrasted with the real world of toil, strife, and sin. "Low-Anchored Cloud" employs a series of metaphors to paint a poetic canvas: "Fountain-head and source of rivers, / Dew-cloth, dream drapery, / And napkin spread by fays; / Drifting meadow of the air. . . ." "My Books I'd Fain Cast Off, I Cannot Read" follows the advice of Wordsworth in "The Tables Turned," and the poet lies watching a battle of red and black ants on a hummock and even enjoys the sudden rain which drenches him. In "Nature" he desires no high fame or place in the world, only to be a child and pupil of nature living and working in it. "A Winter and Spring Scene" is an interesting experiment in four-syllable lines with multiple rhymes to achieve an effect of lighthearted celebration of early spring in New England.

One chapter of *Walden* is entitled "Sounds"; in it Thoreau tells of those he hears from his cabin, some from nature and some from the world of men. His responsiveness to sounds is found also in his

poems. There are the songs of the chickadee, the vireo, and other birds. In "The Cliffs and Springs" the poet, alone, hears at noon the trill of the veery or thrush and feels that the melody is addressed to him from "out the depths of universal being." The bird song ends, there comes the low of distant cattle, and then the cries of farm boys in a neighboring vale remind him that he is a mere denizen of earth. "Upon the Bank at Early Dawn" celebrates the cock that wakes the world and in the "rare bragging of thy throat" makes even God himself appear more young. "The Funeral Bell" contrasts the sad tones of the tolling bell with the silence of lovely flower bells. "Music" reveals the renovating power of musical notes upon the dull, despondent spirit. "I've Heard My Neighbor's Pump at Night," with its comparison of the sound to a bittern's call or the squeak of a meadow hen, anticipates the New England poems of Robert Frost.

No case can be made for Thoreau as more than a minor poet, but his best lines have a memorable quality in them. Nowhere is this better seen than in his "Smoke," first published in the *Dial* in 1843 and republished in *Walden* more than a decade later.

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward
flight;
Lark without song, and messenger of
dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy
form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy
skirts;
By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the
sun;
Go thou, my incense, upward from this
hearth,
And ask the gods to pardon this clear
flame.

THE POETRY OF TRAHERNE

Author: Thomas Traherne (c. 1637-1674)

First published: *Poems*, c. 1655-1674, first published 1903; *Poems of Felicity*, c. 1655-1674, first published 1910

Thomas Traherne was one of the last seventeenth century inheritors of the Metaphysical tradition of religious poetry, developed to its height by John Donne and George Herbert, who drew on every aspect of the world around them to express their faith and their longing for closer communion with God. Much of their complexity of thought and their awareness of the essentially paradoxical nature of the Christian religion was lost on Traherne, whose concepts and style were much simpler and less compact than theirs. The greatest differences between Traherne and his predecessors undoubtedly resulted from his radically different theology. Both Donne and Herbert struggled with a strong sense of sin, a feeling of man's unworthiness, and as a consequence of this realization they had an

equally overwhelming perception of the miraculous, outreaching mercy of God.

Traherne, who was closer in spirit to the great Romantic poets, Blake and Wordsworth, than to his own contemporaries, wrote out of a deep conviction of man's innate innocence. Original sin forms no part of his faith, though he was conscious, intellectually if not emotionally, of man's corruption, which he felt was derived from the world's emphasis on materialism. Evil comes from human greed; gold, silver, and jewels are symbols not of beauty, but of temptation and of that avarice that perverts man's youthful joy in the creation. Nature, not wealth, is for Traherne the greatest of human possessions. He who is an inheritor of the light of the stars and the fruitful soil can desire no more.

Just as Donne's complex metaphorical language reflects his equally involved theology, so Traherne's brief stanzas echo the essential simplicity of his vision. His lyrics have been compared to William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, though he never achieved the sustained control of the later poet. Both his form and his devotional tone are perhaps closest to the less impassioned poems of Herbert, who may have inspired him to experiment with a wide variety of verse forms, not always successfully. Traherne's work is characterized by lines of striking loveliness in the midst of uninspired, wordy mediocrity. His limitations in his religious thought are partly responsible for those of his poetry: a narrowness of vision, a lack of awareness of many significant sides of life, and a tendency to repetitiveness. He never really mastered the poetic control of Donne, Herbert, or even of Vaughan, another late Metaphysical poet with mystical tendencies, who shared Traherne's propensity for unevenness in his writing. This problem can be clearly seen in a lyric which begins with an unusual and striking vision of "new worlds beneath the water." The intensity of the opening is dissipated by the weakness of the end of the stanza:

I saw new worlds beneath the water lie,
 New people; yea, another sky
 And sun, which seen by day
 Might things more clear display.
 Just such another
 Of late my brother
 Did in his travel see, and saw by night
 A much more strange and wondrous sight;
 Nor could the world exhibit such another
 So great a sight, but in a brother.

Dominant themes in Traherne's poetry include the innocence of childhood, when human eyes look upon everything with delight and wonder, the glories of the natural world, and the corruptions of the commerce-directed society of the time. Perhaps the best-known and most skillful treatment of these characteristic

themes comes in "Wonder," a rather ecstatic statement of the poet's childhood reaction to the world around him:

How like an Angel came I down!
 How Bright are all Things here!
 When first among his Works I did
 appear
 O how their GLORY me did Crown?
 The World resembled his Eternitie,
 In which my Soul did Walk;
 And every Thing that I did see,
 Did with me talk.

Like Wordsworth, Traherne suggests a kind of platonic pre-existence, when men's souls were united with God. Children retain some of this divine luster until greed gradually wears it away. Though Wordsworth could not have known Traherne's poems, since they were lost until late in the nineteenth century, his "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" has surprising echoes of a poem called "News," in which Traherne ponders his early sense that there was a world of bliss beyond the one he saw. Unlike Wordsworth, however, Traherne finds the creation not a consolation for the loss of heavenly bliss, but this bliss itself:

But little did the infant dream
 That all the treasures of the world
 were by,
 And that himself was so the cream
 And crown of all which round about
 did lie.
 Yet thus it was! The gem,
 The diadem,
 The ring enclosing all
 That stood upon this earthen ball,
 The heavenly eye,
 Much wider than the sky,
 Wherein they all included were,
 The love, the soul, that was the king
 Made to possess them, did appear
 A very little thing.

In another poem, "The Apostasy," distinguished by a complex, well-handled stanza form, Traherne comments at greater length on his childish appreciation of the natural world, when he seemed to dwell in Eden before the fall:

As Eve
 I did believe
 Myself in Eden set,
 Affecting neither gold nor ermined
 crowns,
 Nor aught else that I need forget;
 No mud did foul my limpid streams,
 No mist eclipsed my sun with frowns;
 Set off with heav'nly beams,
 My joys were meadows, fields, and
 towns.

Temptation entered his paradise with
 "those little, new-invented things, fine
 lace and silks . . . or wordly pelf that
 us destroys." His own fall was gradual,
 but he, like all other men, was corrupted,
 separated, finally made "a stranger to the
 shining skies."

Traherne's poetry has a pervasive quality
 of innocence and purity; even when
 he speaks of corruption, he seems to be
 living in an incorruptible world himself,
 and he preserved a child's uncomplex
 awareness of existence. Both his language
 and his images reflect these characteristics.
 They are expanded, not compressed;
 a poet of mood, rather than of ideas,
 Traherne built much of his effect
 through repetition and restatement, deriving
 images from the preceding ones, finding
 new examples to express the same idea,
 as he does in the following stanza:

A globe of earth is better far
 Than if it were a globe of gold; a star
 Much brighter than a precious stone;
 The sun more glorious than a costly
 throne—
 His warming beam,
 A living stream
 Of liquid pearl, that from a spring
 Waters the earth, is a most precious
 thing.

Traherne's fondness for the exclamatory
 tone is especially evident in a little
 verse appropriately entitled "The Rap-
 ture," which conveys that joy in existence
 that is part of so much of his poetry, especially
 that about childhood:

Sweet infancy!
 O heavenly fire! O sacred light!
 How fair and bright!

How great am I,
 Whom the whole world doth magnify!

The poet does have other voices. In
 "Insatiableness," a poem faintly reminiscent
 of Herbert's "The Pulley," in which
 God is seen withholding the gift of rest
 from man that "weariness" may turn him
 back toward the Deity, Traherne restates
 in three successive stanzas the impossibility
 of satisfying the "busy, vast, inquiring
 soul" of man. His conclusion differs from
 Herbert's; this restless spirit is, finally,
 proof of the existence of God: "Sure
 there's a God, (for else there's no delight,
) One infinite."

One of the most unusual of Traherne's
 poems is "A Serious and Curious Night
 Meditation," where he deals with a
 theme he rarely touches on—death as a
 physical process, rather than as a spiritual
 reunion with God. Some of the images
 have the harsh, almost macabre realism of
 the true Metaphysical poets like Donne
 and Marvell:

What is my Fathers House! and what
 am I!
 My fathers House is Earth; where I
 must lie:
 And I a worm, no man; that fits no
 room,
 Till like a worm, I crawl into my
 Tomb.

Even here there is a suggestion of the
 awareness of beauty that is characteristic
 of Traherne, in the lines "Whilst, at my
 window, pretty Birds do Ring my Knell,
 and with their Notes my Obit sing." The
 conclusion is a weaker version of Donne's
 triumphant affirmation in his sonnet,
 "Death Be Not Proud":

Sleep is Cousin-german unto Death:
 Sleep and Death differ, no more, than
 a Carcass
 And a skeleton.

Therefore, since he sleeps peacefully in
 his bed, he has no reason to fear death.

Traherne's formula for "felicity," a
 term that recurs frequently in both his
 poetry and in his fine prose work, the

Centuries of Meditations, is effectively summarized in "The Recovery." Here he presents his conviction that man's pleasure is God's reward: "Our blessedness to see/Is even to the Deity/A beatific vision." Men see God's glory in his works and worship him through their joy:

All gold and silver is but empty dross.
 Rubies and sapphires are but loss,
 The very sun and stars and seas
 Far less His spirit please:
 One voluntary act of love
 Far more delightful to His soul doth
 prove
 And is above all these as far as love.

Traherne's own joy in the works of God is perhaps the most memorable quality of his poetry; his exuberant praise of nature and the innocence of childhood is

for the reader at least temporarily infectious. There is, however, a sameness about his work, a lack of variety in his ideas and in his vocabulary, which makes it difficult to read many of his poems at a sitting without feeling the sweetness and the smoothness rather oppressive. When even evil is described in terms of gold and silver, rubies and sapphires, words which have inevitably been associated with beauty rather than with corruption, one eventually begins to long for a single harsh phrase or metaphor of real ugliness. However, notwithstanding all his limitations, Traherne deserves a place of respect among the poets of his century for expressing, often very beautifully and appropriately, his own unique view of life and the way to human happiness.

THE POETRY OF VALÉRY

Author: Paul Valéry (1871-1945)

First published: *La Jeune Parque*, 1917; *Album de vers anciens*, *Poèmes* 1890-1893, 1920; *Charmes*, 1922

Paul Valéry said that while making poems he always watched himself at work on them. This statement is a good place to begin a consideration of Valéry's poetry, for it reveals the super-consciousness of a writer whose major theme and inspiration are super-consciousness. Thought and the process of thought interested Valéry above all other things; and in an effort to make poetry of these concerns he followed the lead of the French Symbolist movement in attempting to write a "pure" poetry in which thought itself would be purely felt without the impurities and lack of clarity that the use of language usually involves.

Valéry's idea of pure poetry was much influenced by the thought of Mallarmé, whom the young Valéry knew and admired. Poetry is not, Valéry insisted, prose dressed up with pretty and poetical devices; a poem cannot be reduced to the expression of a mere idea. The thing we experience when we truly feel a poem is

revelation and communication of a poetic state which involves the thinking, feeling being. The experience of a poetic state, which is the whole reason for the poem's existence, cannot be translated into any other form of expression than the poem itself without destroying the unique poetic state. Each poem is a construct that lives only for and by itself. Poetry uses language to make in each individual poem a "language within language" that can only be understood within the world of the particular poem; a language that can be understood only after reading and rereading have brought a full experiencing of the individual poem. When the reader understands this "language within language," he is immersed in the poetic world the poet has created. It is a world of poetic music, harmony, and resonance arising from the interplay of the sound and connotations as well as from the denotations of the words in the poem. When the reader is thus immersed in the

poetic world, the true pure text of the poem is "created" in the sensibility, the structure of aesthetic response.

The union of the reader's mind and the poem is impossible in prose, or in "impure" poetry which is based on the statement of ideas rather than on the exploitation of the meanings within words that the true poet releases by his harmonic and musical arrangement and juxtaposition of words in pure poetry. Pure poetry is poetry that finds its world within the relationship of words, not in the relationship of words and the things they refer to.

Since pure poetry can only be known as it is actually being felt by a reader, pure poetry exists only as it is actually being said aloud, and heard, and experienced: only when we are being made the sensitive instrument upon which the poem plays. As we read the poem our voice, our intelligence, our sensibility are shaped into a single experience by the art of the poet: the letters printed on the page are not the poem; the experience of the poem is the poem. Valéry has made his best statement on pure poetry in his *Little Notebook of a Poet (Calepin d'un poète)*.

Committed as he was to a poetry of pure intellect, Valéry played down the idea of poetic inspiration in favour of an emphasis on the poet's conscious labor and construction. He did not deny that the poet feels a kind of creative energy as he contemplates and writes. But the task of the poet is to make his readers feel inspired, not himself. To accomplish this task the poet must always be aware of what he is doing, of how he is doing it; he must be in total control. The poet must go beyond mere inspiration. Pure poetry is the product not of enthusiasm and accident, but choice and conscious work by the poet who has the idea of pure poetry constantly in mind.

The poet, for Valéry, is a professional. The characteristics of the poetic profession are patience, conscious effort, and knowing how to discern and use what is

poetic in chance ideas and observations. The poet must wait for the germ of a poem to appear. When the germ does present itself, the poet must know how to exploit it and how to resist the impulse to stop work, to "finish" the poem. The poet is an "architect of poems" who is concerned with the problems of expression: it is not with ideas that poems are made, but with words. Feeling this way, it is no surprise that Valéry valued the controlled art of classicism more than the effusions of the Romantics. He did not protest against rigid rules, forms, and restrictions of vocabulary; on the contrary, he saw in such restrictions the very source of poetic greatness. They are devices by which the poet may more fully control his language.

Valéry is often accused of being an obscure poet. His obscurity, however, is not a systematic effect sought after, as it is in the poetry of Mallarmé. It is the result of the genesis of Valéry's poetry and its subject matter. The poems arose from years of examination of his own thought, the processes of thought, and the idea of pure intellect that occupied him for over twenty years. Further, the subtle ideas that obsessed the poet are virtually impossible to catch in language. Valéry claimed that language was not constructed to express precisely the complex states of mind and soul of a complex man: and these things are exactly what he wanted to express in his poetry. Further, obscurity in poetry is a problem both of the complexity of the poem and the complexity of the person who reads the poem. Valéry unhesitatingly affirmed that his poetry was for the happy few. Only a complex man can understand a complex poem, and such understanding will never be easy, for complexity is the opposite of ease.

The poetic production of Valéry is very slim. He published only two small volumes of verse: *Album de vers anciens* and *Charmes*. The first of these, published in 1920, is made up of poems Valéry wrote in his youth in the early 1890's before he had renounced poetry as

the result of a personal crisis in 1892. The poems are interesting in that they reflect the formative Symbolist influences on young Valéry and because they foreshadow to some extent the later poetry, and in many ways "Narcissus Speaks," one of these early poems, is a promise of what was to come. In this poem the mythological Narcissus (an appropriate symbol in the poetry of a man almost completely concerned with the nature of his own being) languishes in his pure love for his own chaste beauty. He becomes identified with his image as he kisses the still water of a reflecting pool and vanishes in the resulting crystalline ripple.

When he was asked in 1912 by André Gide to put his old verse together in the volume that became the 1920 edition of *Album*, Valéry still did not intend to write any new poetry. But as he was working over one of the pieces that was to be included in the book, he became engrossed in the problems of writing and began to work on what was to be his first mature poem. After four years of work, and the expansion of a few old lines into a new 512-line poem, Valéry published "The youngest of the Fates" ("La Jeune Parque"), in 1917. At one stroke his new style was achieved. The main theme of the poem is the motion of a consciousness during a sleepless night. The three Fates symbolized to the ancients the various stages of a man's life. Valéry's choice of the youngest Fate as his symbol is proper to this poem in which a consciousness first begins to be aware of itself and to gain self-knowledge. The consciousness in the poem experiences her past and considers the problems of the conscious being conscious of itself: a young girl in the adolescent crises.

All the rest of Valéry's poetry appeared in his *Charmes*. This volume contains only twenty-one poems—Valéry's entire *oeuvre* totals a mere forty-three. The poems in *Charmes* had first appeared in literary magazines after the publication of

"The Youngest of the Fates" and they, like the "The Youngest," had attracted a great deal of attention. Valéry was elected to the French Academy in 1925 on the strength of *Charmes*.

The première piece in *Charmes*, Valéry's greatest and best-known poem, is "The Cemetery Beside the Sea" ("Le Cimetière Marin"). This poem, like all of Valéry's work, is untranslatable, if only because of its dependence for effect on the music of the French language. Every language has its own musical possibilities which are unique to it alone and which, thus, have no equivalents in other languages. Valéry, more than most poets, depended on the genius of his mother tongue for his poetic effects, and these effects can be known only if the poems are read (and heard) in French. The basic situation of "The Cemetery Beside the Sea" is all that can be described here; this description must not be confused with the poem itself. They can be only distantly related.

The theme of the piece is Valéry's own dilemma. The poet always was torn between the desire to participate in the active life and the desire to withdraw into pure contemplation; contemplation, indeed, of contemplation itself. The poet goes in imagination to the cemetery beside the sea in his home town. He had dreamed there in his youth. At high noon among the graves and tombs he contemplates the sea, which seems to him to be the essence of changelessness. He is at peace and is motionless. He is existing in perfect thought, yet he is anxious and uneasy; he sees signs that he in fact exists in change, that things do not hold eternal perfection but that they change. One flaw in perfection that the poet sees is his own doubt of perfection—this is his proof. Even doubt must die; even the thought of imperfection cannot be perfect. The poet sees that he must live, that he cannot escape into pure abstraction and thought.

THE POETRY OF VAUGHAN

Author: Henry Vaughan (1622-1695)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1646; *Olor Iscanus*, 1651; *Silex Scintillans*, 1650, 1655; *Thalia Rediviva*, 1678

Henry Vaughan is best known as a religious poet, a follower of the metaphysical tradition of John Donne and George Herbert, and a precursor of Wordsworth in his interest in the ideas of the seventeenth century Platonists, philosophers who emphasized man's innate good, the innocent wisdom of childhood, and the possibility of mystical union with God. Like John Donne, Vaughan turned to religious poetry relatively late in his career; he was a law student in London during the years just before the Civil Wars, and his first volume of verse, *Poems*, reveals his close reading of the popular court poets of the age of Charles I.

A number of his early poems are love lyrics addressed to Amoret, probably an imaginary lady. They show little originality, though they are competent, pleasant, polished works. Even at this stage in his development Vaughan was a skillful metrist, able to create many different effects through a variety of verse forms. His sentiments and images are typical of the age; his passion is strictly "platonic." It is the lady's soul he loves, though he complains that she is as heartless and unyielding as the ladies addressed by the other Cavalier poets. Cupid, the cruel god of love, plays a major part in many of Vaughan's lyrics, as he does in the works of writers like Ben Jonson and Thomas Randolph, to whom the poet acknowledges his debt.

There are, among the imitative and undistinguished lines of these poems, flashes of that gift of language which makes some of Vaughan's later lyrics rank high among the verses of his century:

If, Amoret, that glorious Eye,
In the first birth of light,
And death of Night,
Had with those elder firs you spy
Scatter'd so high
Received form, and sight;

We might suspect in the vast Ring,
Amidst these golden glories,
And fierie stories;
Whether the Sun had been the King,
And guide of Day,
Or your brighter eye should sway.

The comparison of the lady's brightness to that of the sun is commonplace, but the poet's vision of the night sky is his own.

Poems included, in addition to the typically Caroline love lyrics, an amusing description of London night life that ended with a drinking song and a translation of Juvenal's tenth satire. Vaughan's translation reads smoothly, but it suffers greatly by comparison with Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes," an adaptation of the same Latin poem. Though both English poets used iambic pentameter rhyming couplets, Vaughan's extended verse paragraphs have little of the pointed conciseness that the eighteenth century poet gave to the form. Satire was, in any case, quite foreign to Vaughan's temperament, and he wisely turned his attention to other subjects in his later works.

Most of the poems in *Olor Iscanus*, published in 1651, were written in the mid-1640's; they also show the influence of poets of the preceding generation. Most of the poems are epistles to Vaughan's acquaintances on a variety of occasions: the publication of a volume of plays, an invitation to dinner, or the marriage of friends. The influence of Ben Jonson's poetry is clear in these works, as well as in the two elegies on Vaughan's friends who met their deaths in the Civil War. There are echoes of Jonson's famous poem on the death of Sir Henry Morison in "An Elegy on the Death of Mr. R. W. slain in the late unfortunate differences at Routon Heath, near Chester":

Though in so short a span
His riper thoughts had purchas'd more
of man

Than all those worthless livers, which
yet quick,

Have quite outgone their own Arithme-
tick.

He seiz'd perfections, and without a
dull

And mossy gray possess'd a solid skull.

Vaughan's limitations as an elegiac poet
are clear when one compares Jonson's
lines on a similar subject:

It is not growing like a tree

In bulk doth make man better be;

Or standing long an oak, three hundred
year,

To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;

A lily of a day

Is fairer far in May,

Although it fall and die that night,

It was the plant and flower of light.

In small proportions we just beauties
see;

And in short measures, life may perfect
be.

One of the most pleasant poems in
Olor Iscanus is the one addressed "To the
River Isca," from which the volume takes
its name. This pastoral, reflective lyric,
filled with the traditional images of "gen-
tle swains," "beauteous nymphs," "bub-
bling springs and gliding streams," prom-
ises fame to the river through the poetry
it inspired in Vaughan.

Had Vaughan's career ended with
Olar Iscanus, he would probably have
ranked with the very minor Cavalier
poets. However, some event, or combina-
tion of events, perhaps the death of a be-
loved younger brother, brought about his
religious conversion, and he found his
true poetic voice in the works that ap-
peared in the first part of *Silex Scintillans*
in 1650. Vaughan's debt to George Her-
bert is evident in many of the poems; he
followed Herbert's example in experi-
menting with various stanza forms and
unusual patterns of syntax. Vaughan's
"Sundays," like Herbert's "Prayer," con-
sists exclusively of phrases describing the
title word; neither poem contains a verb:

Bright shadows of true Rest! some
shoots of bliss,

Heaven once a week;
The next world's gladness prepossessed
in this;

A day to seek;
Eternity in time; the steps by which
We Climb above all ages; Lamps that
light

Man through his heap of dark days;
and the rich,

And full redemption of the whole
weeks light.

A number of Vaughan's themes also
seem to have been drawn from Herbert's
poetry, among them the ceremonies of
the church, the celebration of important
days in the Christian year, and the con-
stantly emphasized relationship of man's
repentance and God's grace. What stands
out as uniquely Vaughan's is the sense of
innocence and joy that pervades much of
his work. Although at some times he
seems strongly aware of sin and the need
for penitence, at others his Platonism
seems to obliterate his consciousness of
evil and he writes simple, joyous lyrics
like the following:

My Soul, there is a Country

Far beyond the stars,

Where stands a winged Sentry

All skillful in the wars,

There above noise, and danger

Sweet peace sits crown'd with smiles,

And one born in a Manger

Commands the Beauteous files,

He is thy gracious friend,

And (O my Soul awake!)

Did in pure love descend

To die here for thy sake.

A poem often discussed in connection
with Wordsworth's Immortality Ode is
"The Retreat," in which Vaughan's Pla-
tonism is particularly evident. He refers
to the glorious vision of God he preserved
in his childhood and to his closeness to
nature, which seemed to take him back to
that heaven he inhabited before his
birth:

Happy those early dayes! when I
Shin'd in my Angel-infancy.

Before I understood this place
 Appointed for my second race,
 Or taught my soul to fancy ought
 But a white, Celestial thought,
 When yet I had not walked above
 A mile, or two, from my first love,
 And looking back (at that short space,)
 Could see a glimpse of his bright-face;
 When on some gilded Cloud, or flower
 My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
 And in those weaker glories spy
 Some shadows of eternity.

Some of Vaughan's other poems are far less sanguine about the human condition. "The World," whose opening lines, "I saw Eternity the other night like a great Ring of pure and endless light," are among the poet's most famous, pictures man as greedy and self-seeking: "the darksome statesman hung with weights and woe," "the fearful miser on a heap of rust," "the downright Epicure." The poet comments on the folly of those who reject salvation, who "prefer dark night before true light."

Another theme that seems to have fascinated Vaughan was the relationship of body and soul. Unlike the medieval poets who presented two forces pulling in opposite directions, the soul toward God and the body toward the gratification of physical desires, Vaughan sees them as harmonious, concerned chiefly about that period of separation between death and the resurrection. In "Resurrection and Immortality" the soul reassures the body, as if it were a frightened child, that all will be well:

Like some spruce Bride,
 Shall one day rise, and cloth'd with
 shining light
 All pure, and bright
 Re-marry to the soul, for 'tis most
 plain
 Thou [the body] only fall'st to be
 refin'd again.

It is difficult to pinpoint characteristic images in Vaughan's poetry as a whole, for he varies his language with his theme. However, his use of light, brightness, the sun, and the stars, to reflect his sense of

the glory of God is especially memorable. There is a particularly interesting variation on this typically Platonic use of light in the poem entitled "Night":

There is in God (some say)
 A deep, but dazzling darkness; As men
 here
 Say it is late and dusky, because they
 See not all clear;
 O for that night! where I in him
 Might live invisible and dim.

Vaughan makes effective use of commonplace images in a number of his poems. He builds one around the analogy between the root, lying dormant in the ground before it can appear clothed in new loveliness in the spring, and the buried body, preparing in death for the resurrection. In a lyric entitled "Man" Vaughan describes the human condition in the language of weaving:

He knocks at all doors, strays and
 roams,
 Nay hath not so much wit as some
 stones have
 Which in the darkest nights point to
 their homes,
 By some hid sense their Maker gave;
 Man is the shuttle, to whose winding
 quest
 And passage through these looms
 God order'd motion, but ordain'd no
 rest.

Vaughan never entirely abandoned the poetic diction of some of the poems in *Olor Iscanus*, and his last volume, *Thalia Rediviva*, published in 1678, contains several works approaching the neo-classical manner of Waller and Denham. It should be noted, however, that many of these "late" poems were actually written many years before their publication, before Vaughan had done his best work.

Vaughan's religious poems are seldom brilliant throughout; he was a writer whose genius showed itself more fully in single fine lines than in sustained thoughts. However, his ability to convey a sense of personal feeling in his meditations, which sometimes reflect his moods

of ecstasy, sometimes his melancholy view of man's rejection of salvation, makes his works moving as wholes, as well as beautiful groups of lines. His natural bent seems to have been more toward an exalted, visionary state than toward depression, for it is in the poems describing his joy that he is generally at

his best. His sense of sin and struggle seems more often imitated from Herbert's poetry than drawn from his own feelings. Vaughan's work provides an interesting bridge between the intense struggle for personal faith that fills the poetry of Donne and Herbert and the ecstatic peans of Crashaw and Traherne

THE POETRY OF VIGNY

Author: Alfred de Vigny (1799-1863)

First published: *Poèmes*, 1822; *Éloa, ou la soeur des anges*, 1824; *Poèmes antiques et modernes*, 1826, 1829, 1837; *Les Destinées*, 1864

Alfred de Vigny's place in the mainstream of French poetry seems assured. In his life, he made few concessions to popular tastes and did not therefore attract the same adulation as his contemporaries Lamartine and Hugo. For a period of voluble Muses, his output was not great. Nonetheless, the esteem in which Vigny is held has remained constant since his death.

Until about 1830, it seemed that Vigny might rival Victor Hugo as the leader of the Romantic school; however, it became evident that his true position was outside the turmoil of the Romantic Cenacle. For Vigny was essentially a thinker, distrustful of lyrical effusions, who had a sense of moderation and discipline more characteristic of a previous generation than of his own. Eventually, he saw himself as having a social mission, but this he fulfilled from a distance, in the seclusion of his manor at the Le Maine Giraud, to which he retired in 1837.

The collection titled *Poèmes antiques et modernes*, though of uneven quality, shows that as early as 1826, Vigny was capable of treating serious problems in verse. Moreover, his use of the symbol, although hesitant, marks a major development in French poetry; for it allows Vigny to bring his ideas to life, to suggest more than he actually says, while retaining an impersonal form.

The first book, the "Livre mystique," of the *Poèmes antiques et modernes* is made up of three pieces: "Moïse," "Éloa" and "Le Déluge." In "Moïse," Moses is given a sense of discouragement he does not possess in the Old Testament. He feels all the weight of his age and experience; having led the Jews to within sight of the Promised Land, he now seeks only to die, to throw off the burden of wisdom and responsibility which alienates him from other men:

O Lord! I have lived powerful and
alone,
Let me fall into the deep sleep of the
earth!

The dominant idea of this poem is that of the moral solitude, the alienation, of the man of genius. So powerful, so convincing, is the portrait of Moses, that it takes on all the qualities of a myth. As Vigny himself pointed out in a letter to Mlle. Maunoir in December, 1838, Moses' name serves as a mask to suggest the weariness of the superior man of any century.

In "Moïse," the wrath and even the injustice of God are stressed: Moses does not seek immortality, but has it thrust upon him. This theme is developed in "Éloa." Éloa, an angel born of a tear shed by Christ, attempts to save an archangel fallen from Heaven. At first, Satan, the fallen archangel, seems to repent. If God had intervened at that moment, writes

Vigny, perhaps evil would have ceased to exist. But God abandons Eloa, and she is dragged off by Satan as his victim.

"La Fille de Jephthé," which is to be found in the "Livre antique" of *Poèmes antiques et modernes*, may have been inspired by a reading of Chateaubriand, while its form was possibly borrowed from Byron. Nonetheless, the poem bears the unmistakable imprint of Alfred de Vigny, and is probably, after "Moïse," one of the finest in the collection of 1826. The form, alexandrines in four-line stanzas, with couplet rhymes, is an innovation in French poetry, admirably suited to the rigor and sense of tragic inevitability implicit in the theme. Vigny tells the story of Jephthah, one of the judges of Israel, who, before attacking the Ammonites, promised to sacrifice to God, after his victory, the first person to come to meet his army. Jephthah's daughter, his only child, was that person, and the poem describes the tragic meeting of the two.

The "Livre antique" of *Poèmes antiques et modernes* draws on classical and Biblical antiquity, while the third and final book, the "Livre moderne," is inspired by the Middle Ages, episodes in Spain, or happenings in France. Of the poems represented here, mention must be made of "Le Cor." The latter describes the plight of Roland, trapped in the pass of Roncevaux, summoning help by means of his horn, his oliphant. The poem is outstanding for its economy of word and syllable, the sense of urgency it communicates.

The importance of *Poèmes antiques et modernes* resides in Vigny's success in expressing in verse some of the problems at the center of his philosophic position. The poet's interpretation of man's condition seems to be summed up in the "Why?" and "Alas!" uttered by Moses in the first poem discussed here. In exposing his ideas, Vigny managed to give his verses an impersonal quality, a general value, through a clever, if timid, use of the symbol.

Twenty to thirty years of experience

and meditation separate the *Poèmes antiques et modernes* from *Les Destinées*. The latter collection, having as its subtitle *Poèmes philosophiques*, was published in 1864, a few months after Vigny's death. It is the fruit of an attempt to clothe philosophical reflection in verse. The undoubted success of this venture is due in large measure to Vigny's consistent and conscientious use of the symbol. The publication of *Les Destinées* marks a new development in the history of French poetry.

Les Destinées owes its title to the first poem of the collection. Here the poet poses the basic problem of man's condition on earth: since man was created, says Vigny, he has lived in uncertainty and unhappiness, the slave and victim of fate. The coming of Christ brought some relief, for the collar around man's neck was slackened. But, Vigny continues, the chain is still held from above, and though mankind may accomplish great deeds, there is still no real freedom or certainty about God's works.

After the extreme pessimism of "Les Destinées," Vigny, in "La Maison du Berger" ("The Shepherd's House"), announces the ideal after which he strives. The title expresses the symbol inspiring the poet's meditation; the poet, a thinker and social apostle who guides the people towards the ideal life, here resembles the shepherd in his caravan. For the poet should live ideally far from the tumult of an industrial society. Alluding no doubt to Lamartine, Vigny claims that poetry has been cheapened by writers who seek the plaudits of the crowd. On the other hand, nature is insensible. So the poet, turning to Eva, probably an ideal abstraction, not a single figure, whom he has led to the caravan, will prefer to the harshness of nature and the corruption of society the compassion and pity only woman can offer.

In "La Maison du Berger," Vigny proposes an ideal. In "La Mort du Loup" ("The Death of the Wolf") and "Le Mont des Oliviers" ("The Mount of Olives"), he suggests an attitude. The mood

of these two poems is pessimistic. In the former, the courage of the wolf, as it dies, is held up as an example to man. This creature, its body wracked with pain after it has been mortally wounded, utters no sound. Man's duty, according to the poet, is to display the same courage: he must complete his tasks and prepare to meet misfortune and death uncomplainingly.

The somber stoicism of "La Mort du Loup" is also advocated in "Le Mont des Oliviers," another outstanding poem. First published in 1844, this work depicts Christ, a Christ perhaps more human than divine, in the garden of Gethsemane, where His sufferings began. Christ asks of God that His sufferings be used to explain to mankind the reasons for the apparent injustice of the Divinity and the presence of evil in the world. His plea goes unanswered:

But the sky remains black,
and God does not answer

In a final stanza, added in 1862, Vigny says that in the face of God's silence, man can only remain silent and aloof also.

In these two poems the image evoked is admirably appropriate. Yet their appeal lies essentially in Vigny's ability to develop and fill out the image, to give it a life of its own, while translating his thought faithfully. The thought, in a sense, feeds the image, and where the thought is strong and consistent, as is the case here, the image stands out in sharp relief.

Were *Les Destinées* to end here, one must conclude that Vigny's message was purely pessimistic: to exist is to suffer, to exist as a superior being requires a religion of honor to meet more suffering, a

readiness to remain uncomplaining, stoical, and even unenthusiastic. In fact, this religion of honor, this stoicism, is for the poet only a beginning, not an end.

"La Bouteille a la Mer" ("The Bottle in the Sea") and the final poem of *Les Destinées*, "L'Esprit pur" ("The Pure Spirit"), indicate an evolution in Vigny's thought. In the former, an intrepid sea captain casts a bottle containing vital information about reefs and currents into the sea, just before his death. The poet's message is clear. Just as the bottle was later recovered, so might a work of art guide future generations; therefore the writer must ignore present adversity and look toward the future. A poem is a bottle cast into the sea.

"L'Esprit pur" may be considered Vigny's moral and literary testament. In this poem, written some months before his death, he affirms that the reign of the "Pure Spirit," of the written word, has come. The poet has a mission; he must serve as a guide for future generations and write for posterity; he will acquire nobility through his ability to join the past to the future by his writings.

Vigny's place in literature is inside no single school. Several of his themes are characteristically Romantic, while his restraint and respect for his art are reminiscent of Classical French poets. Moreover, his use of the symbol reminds the reader of the debt owed him by the Symbolist movement of the late nineteenth century. Alfred de Vigny's most outstanding trait, reflected in his poetry, was probably the esteem in which he held the Idea throughout his life. While a poet, he was always a thinker, a fact that explains much of the force as well as the occasional stiffness of his verse.

THE POETRY OF WALLER

Author: Edmund Waller (1606-1687)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1645 and 1664; *Divine Love*, 1685

The poems of Edmund Waller were at one time famous, and from the time they were written until the middle of the eighteenth century he had the reputation

of being England's best lyric poet. The poems were admired for several reasons: they seemed to recall the poetry of those Greek and Roman writers who were so greatly admired during the Renaissance, and they marked the use of a new poetic diction or vocabulary by English authors. Also, Waller's poetry represented a turning-away from the obscure (if brilliant) poetry of the Metaphysicals. Instead of difficult words and ideas he used the simplest expression; instead of the broken rhythms of this highly intellectual poetry he popularized the smoothness of the heroic couplet.

Waller's early poetry was amatory and pastoral. It contains the customary numbers of allusions to Flavia, Chloris, and other fictional ladies of this type of poetry. The poems are written in praise of the woman admired and of the idea of love itself. These works do not attempt to give a direct and literal idea of their subject; instead, they refer to the goddesses of myth and the beauty of nature. Thus the subject of "On Her Coming to London" is never really given the form of an actual person, but is described as Juno, Athena, Aurora, and other famous names of myth. The method of this kind of poem is comparison and exaggeration: after the invocation of these goddesses the poet says of his beloved that she is "one that shall / Compare, perhaps exceed them all."

The themes of Waller's love poems are not original, nor is their intention to describe a new way of expressing emotion. They attempt to reinvigorate the lyrics of classical times, and their themes are old and familiar. "To Phyllis" is the kind of *carpe diem* verse we find in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," and like that poem it can be traced at least as far back as Catullus. The whole burden may perhaps be summed up by the first line: "Why should we delay?" Other poems utilize the ancient convention of love as a mortal illness, or a war between man and woman. "Of Love" exemplifies the use of the latter theme; it goes through the

whole familiar canon of love's despair. Love makes the lover

lament, and sigh, and weep,
Disordered, tremble, fawn and creep.

The woman is the conventional tyrant of Renaissance love poetry, the lover her equally conventional slave. The struggle is in vain; like the hunted stag, the lover is outmatched by the forces against him.

Much of Waller's poetry is "occasional," the kind of writing that commemorates some event. He writes of the sentimental qualities of a riband that a woman has bound around her hair; of a painting which has caused him to fall in love; of a lady he has seen in a garden. In each of these Waller follows the convention of love at first sight. The lover, who is always pictured as the man of great sensibility, immediately responds to the beauty of the person or object he sees before him. His "On the Discovery of A Lady's Painting" invokes the Pygmalion myth and states that he has been seized by a passion unlike any "mortal flame" simply by seeing the representation of beauty. The most explicit statement of this kind of feeling is expressed in Waller's "Of Loving at First Sight," in which the poet conceives of himself as a seaman captured by a tempest and driven to his fate.

Waller did not confine himself solely to lyric poetry. His single best-known poem is about Oliver Cromwell, "A Panegyric to My Lord Protector." This poem was written in the decade when Cromwell ruled England, and its evident admiration for Cromwell was the cause of some embarrassment for Waller after Charles II became King in 1660. It reveals an admiration based on respect for power; the beginning is an apologia for the man who must use force in order to subdue "faction" and "civil hate." There are many historical references in the poem, notably to the strife between the various splinter sects of Puritanism and to that between Parliament and King. With a good deal of pride and exultation Wal-

ler praises the new strength of England, which allows its navy to dominate the seas of Europe. The power of the country extends, Waller writes, "as far as winds can blow." Like Milton, who also praised the power of the Puritan state, Waller writes of its new position in the European community, a position more powerful than it ever enjoyed under the Stuart kings. Yet the poem is about more than political and military power, for it praises especially the religious toleration of the new state, to which "the oppressed shall henceforth resort." Waller writes that this is a new nation which has captured something far more honorable than mere wealth or power. It has shown that England can once more breed things of the "noblest kind," for it has enjoyed a moral resurrection.

The culmination of the poem is the section on the personal achievement of Cromwell. Waller writes in praise not only of Cromwell's courage and generalship, but also of the sense of "proportion" which enabled him to build a state after tearing one down. He uses language from the Bible to describe the patriarchal nature of his hero, who has acted like the great figures from the Book of Kings. Cromwell first taught the English "to subdue their foes," but his greater accomplishment was to "order, teach, and their high spirits compose."

With prudent, if not exactly admirable flexibility, Waller wrote soon after "To the King, Upon his Majesty's Happy Return." This poem sings the praises of Cromwell's rival and is motivated by either a sincere change of heart or simple self-preservation. Like the rising sun, Charles II appears to dispel the clouds of rebellion and to bring forth "full majesty" to the land that has suffered from war and dictatorship. The qualities for which Charles is praised are not to be found in any biography of that king; they derive from the poetry of praise. He is compared to the sun and to Jove, to nature and to heaven. He is praised even more extensively as a Joshua and a Job. Finally, the

poem culminates with a pious wish for the return of all those virtues that had departed with the king from England:

Faith, law, and piety, (that banished
train!)

Justice and truth, with you return
again.

After the Restoration, Waller continued in the vein of panegyric. His "Instructions to a Painter" is a long poem of praise for the nation; it celebrates one of the rare English victories over the Dutch in 1665. Waller conceives of this great event as the subject for an enormous canvas and he advises the hypothetical painter of this picture how best to give an idea of the heroic stature of the combatants. Pre-eminent among them is the "great monarch," who is described as Augustus himself. "To the King" also celebrates the king and his accomplishments and returns to the mode of myth and exaggerated, full-throated praise. There is the favorite comparison to Jove, and other allusions to heroes of the Western World who are like Charles in his "high wisdom" and "power."

Waller had a wide range of poetry. It should be noted that he tried his hand with success at religious poems. His "Divine Poems" begin with an argument for the authority of the Bible and discuss the nature and condition of man in the present. Their great theme is love; they move from the love of God for man to the love of man for his own kind. Their first statement is that only by this love can we "reform mankind" and their last is that we must retain the "image in our thought" of that love which made life possible. Waller writes in these poems that the classical and Christian traditions must eventually be opposed to each other, for the former have only philosophical falsehoods to offer to scriptural truths. After establishing this point of faith, the poet attempts to account for the Creation in terms of "love of creatures yet unmade": man exists only because the love of God permits this existence.

Thereafter these religious poems move to descriptions of fallen man in "this Iron Age." These poems are typical of the Augustan attitude towards human history; they continually balance a sense of progress and aspiration by reminders of the human limitation.

Throughout these poems, no matter how varied their subjects Waller employed the rhyming couplet. He brought to technical excellence this form of verse and began what was to be a great change

—his admirers called it a "reform"—in English poetry. The couplet became the favorite mode of verse in the century after Waller's first experiments with it. Waller's smoothness of expression and rhythm were widely imitated, and the diction he compiled became familiar in the poems of the eighteenth century. In essence, Waller brought back harmonics to English verse and began the great change from the poetry of Donne to that of Dryden.

THE POETRY OF WARREN

Author: Robert Penn Warren (1905-)

First published: *Thirty-six Poems*, 1935; *Eleven Poems on the Same Theme*, 1942; *Selected Poems*, 1923-1943, 1944; *Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices*, 1953; *Promises: Poems 1954-1956*, 1957; *You, Emperors, and Others: Poems 1957-1960*, 1960; *Selected Poems New and Old*, 1923-1966, 1966

Robert Penn Warren's reputation as a novelist and critic has tended to overshadow his achievements and distinction as a poet. Like many of our best fiction writers, he was published as a poet before he gained recognition as a novelist; but, unlike most, he has continued to write poetry throughout his career. This fact would make him stand out even among the poets of his generation, most of whom, after achieving some measure of recognition, a niche in the pantheon of the establishment, have at best settled for the care and preservation of the "image" rather than the risky and perhaps unrewarding business of writing more poems. Both factors may help to explain the undeniable fact that Warren's poetry is not as well known as it might be and ought to be. The divorce between the audience for poetry and the audience for fiction has not been settled. The poetry-reading public remains inconsequentially small compared to the larger public for fiction. And within the poetic establishment there remains a lingering suspicion of the poet who also writes fiction.

In Warren's case this suspicion has without doubt been compounded by the fact that his novels have been extremely well received. Part of this suspicion can

be written off as professional pride at best and, at worst, simple envy; but in a larger sense it is also the result of the specialization so characteristic of our culture as to be inevitably reflected by its artists and, indeed, strongly protected by them. Warren does not fit neatly and nicely. He is clearly, from the present point of view, not only out of date as a man of letters in the grand style, but a threat by his existence and creativity to the *status quo*.

Not that he has been ignored or unrecognized as a poet in the usual way. He has generally received excellent reviews and notices for his poetry and he has won many honors and awards. He has received the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Shelley Memorial Award, and he has served as Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. Some of his poems, particularly the earlier ones, are widely anthologized. But ironically, in spite of his honors, his influence by criticism and example, in spite of his innovation and, above all, his sustained and genuine productivity, he is not often considered critically as a poet.

There is a kind of double irony at work here, for had he continued to write in the manner of his earliest and best-known poems, the manner of *Thirty-six*

Poems and Eleven Poems on the Same Theme, he might have been more acceptable. The early poems, chiefly distinguished by an elegant combination of form and deliberate artifice, deeply influenced by the rules and guidelines of the first generation, the elders, of "The Fugitives," are quite sharply distinct from his prose. At least at that state his prose and poetry seem to be separate concerns. But through the years of his own change and growth he has managed to bring the two into a closer kinship, to integrate his concerns and manners in prose and verse so that they are clearly part of the same body of work, clearly the voice of one man. Though most modern poets pay brief lip service to Ezra Pound's fiat, that poetry should be as well written as prose, major energy has been spent in cultivating what is special and singular about poetry as if to segregate forever the prosaic from the lyric precincts. It is in this sense that Warren's development as poet has gone against the grain.

In some of his early poems Warren showed that he could turn the modern "metaphysical" lyric to perfection. The final, familiar quatrain of "Bearded Oaks" is a marvelous example, the manner of Andrew Marvell gracefully translated into twentieth century English. And in the frequently anthologized "Love's Parable" we see the influence of John Donne, its origins proudly shown in the syntax, in the archaisms and inversions, and even in the imagery.

Warren might have continued in that vein, and not without distinction; but he was at once a gifted storyteller and deeply involved in the living Southern tradition. Scattered among the early poems which were brought together in *Selected Poems, 1923-1943*, there are various examples of poems which break the pattern and have a very different kind of grace, life, and vigor. "The Ballad of Billie Potts" is a real story, a sustained narrative poem which is at once particular and concrete, precisely local in color and allusion, and laced with homely

imagery, some of it directly out of the folk tradition and some contrived to be a close approximation of the original and source. And in a small group of poems set in Mexico he demonstrated an ease and ability to handle concrete scene and action in verse which could rival his abilities in prose.

In 1953, Warren presented *Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices*, a book-length narrative poem which seems to combine in one work all his interests. It has the story line of a novel; much of it is dramatic in form; and by introducing himself as a character and commentator in the action Warren is, in effect, a critic as well. But the form is verse; and thus it is in Warren's poetry that we find the unity of his various interests, techniques, and concerns. On the immediate and dramatic level he tells the story of a particularly brutal and gruesome crime, the literal butchering of a Negro slave by Lilburn Lewis, the nephew of Thomas Jefferson. The background and psychological complexity of the crime is as thoroughly explored as in any novel. Then by adding Thomas Jefferson, whose brave new world did not seem to take account of the potential for evil even in his family blood lines, Warren creates a dimension of dramatic conflict, in this case the conflict of ideas, on another level than the presented action. Finally there is Warren himself, literally visiting the site of the crime and imaginatively summoning up the ghosts, conversing with Jefferson, arguing too; thus modern man, in the form of the author, is brought directly into the drama as well. In a work of this size and scope all the demonstrated ability of Warren to use verse for scene, action, and psychological and metaphysical speculation had to be employed. What was needed as well, required by the length if nothing else, was a rhetorical line which could contain with simplicity and dignity the burden of thought without calling attention to itself and breaking the spell of the whole poem and without being so complex as to lose the meaning. This was

for Warren a new kind of simplicity and power. To achieve it he returned to the roots of poetry, to the clear and sustained and unsurprising metaphor, to cadence, to repetition, to mnemonic power.

In one sense *Brother to Dragons* was a peak, a culmination of all Warren's work to date. Where he might go from there, in what direction, would have been difficult to imagine. *Promises: Poems 1954-1956* offered an answer. It was evident that *Brother to Dragons* had been a liberating experience for the poet, had, even as the new title implies, opened up new possibilities for him. On the surface the book is technically different from anything he had done before. There is a newly devised long line, based often on stress rhythms and speech cadences. There are new variations on stanzaic form. The language itself, though clearly in his recognizable voice, seems different too. Its singularity is the simultaneous ability to join both the "poetic" and the prosaic to create a total effect of poetry. Something of the virtuoso's mastery of the modes of apparent simplicity, so evident in *Brother to Dragons*, is now focused on the genre of the contemporary lyric. And there is now, by implication, a declaration of independence. No subject, no word, no notion is to be segregated by definition from the realm of poetry.

The real breakthrough in *Promises* is in language. For a very long time, and still to a degree, the Southern literary tradition of which Warren's work is an important modern example had been founded upon a very clear and present distinction between poetry and prose. Though Southern poets and critics in this century have exercised great influence, it has been the Southern prose writers, the novelists and short story writers, who exploited most fully the richness and variety of the regional vernacular and public rhetorical language. Other poets—William Carlos Williams, Pound, Eliot, Stevens, each in a different way—worried with extending the limits of the language of poetry. But Warren, growing and de-

veloping as a novelist, had clearly seen the possibilities largely unexplored by other Southern poets. With *Promises*, after a brief period of silence, he returned with new forms, wider and richer language and subject matter, and a bold assault on the limits of poetry at a time when poetry seemed to have dwindled to two not completely dissimilar voices—the "academic" and the "beat." *Promises* won all the prizes for 1957.

Yet it is in his 1960 collection called *You, Emperors, and Others: Poems 1957-1960* that the new territory claimed and won in *Promises* is consolidated and settled. Bookjackets are not celebrated for their veracity, but the jacket of this book is quite simply accurate when it states: "*You, Emperors, and Others* is an extension of the lyric voice which made *Promises* such an important literary event." There is consolidation as well as extension. There are examples of poems which could easily have been a part of *Promises*, but there is more variety in form and, if anything, more ease in the range and kinds of language the poet can employ. The range includes the dignity of his earlier tone, more controlled now, tougher than before.

Remarkably, with his new freedom, his new toughness, even wisdom, the poet has not lost the thing that young poets are said to lose to time and experience, the purely lyric note. In truth, he is more at ease with the lyric voice than he has ever been before.

Warren's achievement over many years is an important part of the American literary scene. With a very few exceptions, there have been almost no examples in this century of the continued development and growth of an American poet from youth to age, to an age characterized by wisdom without loss of impulse, by technical ease without rigidity and habitual gestures. Yeats was such an example in our language. Warren is another. His "late" poems can bear the analogy. And he is still young enough to continue, to prove by and through his work that it

is possible to be a poet here and now and for a lifetime. The promise of the future is implied clearly in one of the final poems of *You, Emperors, and Others*, one of a virtuoso sequence of "nursery rhymes." The subject is "history," in all

the rich complexity that Warren's use of the word in his works suggests; but, in one sense, it may be conceived of as personal history, the history of the working poet, as well.

THE POETRY OF WHITTIER

Author: John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

Principal published works: *Legends of New England*, 1831; *Moll Pitcher*, 1832; *Mogg Megone*, 1836; *Lays of My Home*, 1843; *Ballads and Other Poems*, 1844; *Voices of Freedom*, 1846; *Songs of Labor*, 1850; *The Chapel of the Hermits*, 1853; *The Panorama*, 1856; *The Sycamores*, 1857; *Home Ballads*, 1860; *In War-Time*, 1864; *Snow-Bound*, 1866; *The Tent on the Beach*, 1867; *Among the Hills*, 1869; *Miriam*, 1871; *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim*, 1872; *Hazel-Blossoms*, 1875; *The Bay of Seven Islands*, 1883; *St. Gregory's Guest*, 1886; *At Sundown*, 1890

In the "Proem," a poem chosen to introduce his collected works, Whittier scrutinized his poetic achievement and noted that he had never been able to emulate the great lyric beauty and deep philosophical insight of poets like Milton and Spenser. With characteristic honesty he analyzed his inability to echo their marvelous music:

The rigor of a frozen clime,
The harshness of an untaught ear,
The jarring words of one whose
 rhyme
Beat often Labor's hurried time,
Or Duty's rugged march through storm
 and strife, are here.

These sparse lines provide an outline for Whittier's life. Reared in a nonconformist Quaker faith, he always retained the Quaker concept of the presence of the Inner Light in each individual and the belief in special brotherhood and equality. From his earliest years he experienced the "rigors" of exacting farm work, where only the strictest economy and frugality kept the Whittier farm above poverty. This was his education, for he had little formal schooling beyond two terms at a local academy. In these years Whittier was primarily a sectional romantic, a journalist poet who was nourished on the strange literary diet of the

Bible, Burns, and Byron. His poetry was blatantly derivative, though his first book, *Legends of New England*, handled native superstitions and folklore. Whittier's second main phase, from 1833 to the 1860's, was a period of reform activity and humanitarian interest. The intensity of his single-minded dedication to the Abolitionist cause effectively vetoed poetry and converted the aspiring young lyricist into a radical propagandist, politician, and part-time editor whose verses championed the rights of slaves and democratic principles. These years drew Whittier away from a love of poetry for its own sake, reformed his vapid sentimental lyricism into a powerful weapon for the oppressed, and strengthened his regard for moral action.

The remainder of Whittier's life is aptly summed up in these autobiographical lines from "The Tent on the Beach":

For while he wrought with strenuous
 will
The work his hands had found to
 do,
He heard the fitful music still
Of winds that out of dream-land
 blew.

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The common air was thick with
 dreams,—
He told them to the toiling crowd;

Such music as the woods and streams
 Sang in his ear he sang aloud;
 In still, shut bays, on windy capes,
 He heard the call of beckoning
 shapes,
 And, as the gray old shadows prompted
 him,
 To homely moulds of rhyme he shaped
 their legends grim.

As his Abolitionist activities lessened, Whittier devoted more time to reworking the familiar ground of native legends and versifying the pent-up memories of his youth. By the 1850's the poet again dominated and Whittier entered into his final years as a religious humanist, striving for moral perfection and inner spirituality rather than for social and political reform. His work as an Abolitionist nurtured his passionate concern for the principles of liberty, while through study and reading he had steeped his mind in the history and customs of New England until he understood the past as he had experienced the present.

Like most of the schoolroom poets, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, and others, Whittier's themes were few and limited: the value of domestic emotions, the innocence of childhood, the necessity of social equality, and the nobility of ethical action. However, unlike these other popular poets, Whittier drew upon his native roots for inspiration. In his best poems Whittier displayed a mastery of local color techniques, a competent use of rural imagery, and the everyday language of the Merrimack farmer. His instinctive handling of native materials conveyed his inner love for the environment that molded and his understanding of the traditions that inspired him. His technique was old-fashioned, even in his own day, while his poetry suffered from the diffusion and sentimentality inherent in the tradition of public rhetoric in which he wrote. He composed far too many poems and when imagination lagged he fell back on stock phrases, repetitive images, and imitative themes. Perhaps no other

established nineteenth century American poet wrote so much poor verse, but the miracle is that by the most exacting poetical standards his best remains so good.

Aside from a few nature poems like "The Last Walk in Autumn" and an occasional Abolitionist poem like "Icha-bod," Whittier's ballads and genre pieces represent his finest poetical achievement and contain some of the best examples of native folklore written in America. His ballads, especially, express his lifelong interest in colonial history, the Quakers, local legends, and folk superstitions. Unlike Longfellow's conscious literary ballads which emphasized the dream world of European romance, Whittier's ballads remain remarkably true to the graphic realism and dramatic intensity of traditional folk balladry. His earliest ballads in the 1840's—"The Exiles," "Cassandra Southwick," and "Barclay of Ury"—though over long and marred by didactic passages, show Whittier handling his proper subject matter and approaching surety of presentation that the ballad "Kathleen" demonstrated. His mature ballads took incidents like a skipper who had betrayed his own townspeople, a witch who prophesied death, or the terrifying actions of specter warriors, bed-rocked them with exact physical detail, and then concentrated on the dramatic moment of conflict. "Telling the Bees" skillfully handles a local superstition with childlike detail to hide the chilling reality of nature's destruction; "The Garrison of Cape Ann," "The Palatine," and "The King's Missive" rework historical incidents; "Amy Wentworth," "The Countess," and "The Witch of Wenham" narrate pastoral romances; while the often parodied "Barbara Frietchie" was accepted by a war-weary nation as an expression of their personal conviction that the Union must be preserved. Whittier's finest ballad, "Skipper Ireson's Ride," was based on an old Marblehead song about women tarring and feathering a fishing-boat captain. The ballad opens *in medias*

res, plunging directly into the wild tumult and chaos of mob action as the skipper is pushed through Marblehead:

Body of turkey, head of owl,
Wings a-droop like a rained-on fowl,
Feathered and ruffled in every part,
Skipper Ireson stood in the cart.
Scores of women, old and young,
Strong of muscle, and glib of tongue.
Pushed and pulled up the rocky lane,
Shouting and singing the shrill refrain:
"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd
horrt,
Torr'd an futherr'd an' corr'd in a
corr't
By the women o' Morble'ead!"

Finally Ireson cries out his remorse and with "half scorn, half pity" the women free him. The final refrain changes "Old" Floyd Ireson to "Poor" Floyd Ireson and becomes a mournful dirge forever accusing and dooming Ireson besides emphasizing the hollowness of the women's revenge.

Similarly, Whittier's genre poems elevated the ordinary details of Essex County life into a universal expression of boyhood innocence, agrarian simplicity, and pastoral romance that caught the pathos and beauty of a dying rural tradition. In poems like "Maud Muller," "In School-Days," "Among the Hills," and "Memories," Whittier idealized and typified the district school days, the harvest-filled autumn days, and the barefoot-boy days to capture the romantic aspirations of a responsive American public. "Cobbler Keezar's Vision," "Abraham Davenport," "To My Old Schoolmaster," and others contain some of Whittier's best rustic anecdotes as well as realistic and humorous sketches of the Yankee character. His satire of Cotton Mather in "The

Double-Headed Snake of Newbury" reaches its climax in these lines:

Cotton Mather came galloping down
All the way to Newbury town,
With his eyes agog and his ears set
wide,
And his marvellous inkhorn at his side;
Stirring the while in the shallow pool
Of his brains, for the lore he learned
at school,
To garnish the story, with here a streak
Of Latin and there another of Greek.

Whittier's particular skill in re-creating the past is seen most fully in the contemplative poem, "The Pennsylvannia Pilgrim." In his genre poems Whittier captures the essence of the New England mind, while his selected use of picturesque detail and down-East humor place him in the direct line of American expression that stretches from Anne Bradstreet to Robert Frost. His one sustained triumph, "Snow-Bound," expresses the value of family affections by the symbolic development of a fire-storm contrast and remains the minor masterpiece of nineteenth century American poetry.

Although Whittier's poems fall far short of the poetic imagination and philosophical depth of major American poets such as Whitman, Poe, Dickinson, and Emerson, his verses exhibit more spiritual illumination and downright "grit" than the polished verses of Longfellow and the other minor poets. Despite the severe criticism of his poetry in the twentieth century, Whittier's place in American literature seems secure. He will continue to be read and enjoyed as long as people respond to their traditions and demand honest expression of their fundamental democratic and religious feelings.

THE POETRY OF WILBUR

Author: Richard Wilbur (1921-)

Principal published works: *The Beautiful Changes*, 1947; *Ceremony and Other Poems*, 1950; *Things of This World*, 1956; *Poems*, 1943-1956, 1957; *Advice to a Prophet*, 1961

It is difficult to assess Richard Wilbur's lyric poetry in terms of a developing career, a linear working-out and discarding of certain ideas, in the way in which we organize the production of Chaucer's or Wordsworth's poetry. He has said that he turned from playful writing to serious poetry because of the experience of potential chaos in the war; but the war is not overpoweringly present in his first book, *The Beautiful Changes*, although the European Theater seems to loom in the background of many of these poems and the possibility of war remains behind some of his later work.

A comparison of two of the best poems may reveal another kind of development, not of ideas but of poetic power. "On the Eyes of an SS Officer" is one of the few poems in the 1947 volume directly related to the war. The poem is a syllogism in shape; its first two stanzas compare the eyes to ice and glaciers, then to fire and the sun. Clever things happen within the poem. In the first stanza a metaphor within a metaphor refers to fresh snows at the frozen end of the earth's spit. "Spit" is first a reference to barbecuing, a link to the fire stanza, then to sputum: it is a clue to the tone of disgust. The second stanza tells of one blinded by the sun. The blind saint is glorified, for he has seen the Platonic truth, but the SS Officer is called mindless. The last stanza concludes the statement and is filled with ambiguity with references to ice, fire, and eyes. The eyes are oases in a wilderness face. The eyes devise *their* fire, but the poet asks his God to consign the eyes to hell. This type of ambiguity is not exactly the kind Empson admires; first of all it is too rapid, too quickly understood; again it is not finally ambiguous, only ambiguous as we read.

One of Wilbur's best poems is "Advice to a Prophet," the title poem of his 1961 volume. Where in the earlier poem we see a concern with the problems of tone, problems resolved by apparent syntactic ambiguity and puns, here we see much larger problems being handled. The ad-

vice is offered to a prophet of doom, of the Bomb. The prophet's problem is to find a language by which he can communicate his message. He is evoking God's name to cause us to feel self-pity. The advice is not to speak of the military power of weapons nor of the end of the people, for these ideas are inconceivable. Rather, he speaks of the changing world. The loss of nature would destroy humanity; animals and trees are things in which we ourselves are mirrored. They are the ground of our perception, our self-knowledge, as well as the elements of our language. Language and knowledge have merged; consequently the poet asks how we can communicate with nature when we can no longer speak. Wilbur's use of concrete image and abstract noun is different. Finally adjectives themselves, bereft of nouns, must function in a bombed or otherwise emptied world.

The first poem solves the problem of how to express hatred in a poem by pressing language to its limits to equate and disequatate traditional poetic subjects: ice, fire, eyes. In the second poem the language of association and the objects of the language are themselves examined. These are the poles of Wilbur's poetry. This is not to say that language in itself is a new interest for Wilbur. His translations reveal him an expert in French. The poem "Junk" in *Advice to a Prophet* is written in the style of Old English poetry, in two-stressed half-lines linked by alliteration: the theme is that of the "Lay of the Last Survivor" in *Beowulf*—the transience of artifacts. In Wilbur's volume, *Ceremony*, there is a poem "Beowulf" which interprets the old epic. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon shaper of the poem, Wilbur has momentarily shifted the viewpoint, at the end of the fourth stanza, to inside Beowulf's head, and has confused the tenses of verbs, in order to comprehend heroism.

A study of the use of word play in the volumes shows one aspect of Wilbur's poetic maturing. In *The Beautiful Changes*, besides the complex business in

"On the Eyes of an SS Officer," there are two poems selected by Wilbur in his collaboration for the Untermeyer anthology of 1955. In one, "Potato," the pun "blind" occurs twice, referring to the potatoes' eyes. The first line of "Bell Speech," a poem which may have been suggested by the name of the bell being that of St. Paul, has a phrase playing on the tongue-like clapper. Both of these puns are based on physiological and colloquial association; neither has a powerfully serious function. The puns are inefficient.

In *Ceremony* the case alters. For example, "Juggler" contains four puns which bear a good deal of meaning. The poem is about a juggler who is like God and who balances balls like the solar system, then hauls his heaven in and returns to earth to balance normal objects, such as tables, brooms, or plates. The problem is that the world falls from our hearts and is forgotten.

The three puns in this poem are "gravity," "lightness," and "sole." Gravity suggests our prejugglerian humorlessness as well as the state of the Newtonian world: lightness becomes that of objects, of the space around the sun, and of hearts: sole, is the juggler's loneliness and the soul of worlds, the Neo-Platonic, Lucretian soul. The fall of the earth, "fall" being the fourth pun, is overcome by a light-hearted language. In "Still, Citizen Sparrow" there is a picture of a vulture rising over the office described as "rotten." "Office" is both his function as a carrion-eater and a suggestion of the modern office building, leading to the edge of the sky—a skyscraper. The poem is an anti-flyting, taking up the owl's side in the ancient controversy of owl and nightingale, and the inversion is complete: contrary to Keats's vision of his nightingale, it is the owl of this poem, the vulture, who eats death and derides mutability. The world of the grind, of Noah, will out. In the title poem "Ceremony" there is the line in which those who are familiar with Old or Mid-

dle English will recognize a complex series of etymological puns. Another poem, "In the Elegy Season," reverses clichés in the same way that "Advice to a Prophet" does, but this time the cliché is a modern one, the idea of a summer being unremembered in winter.

In Wilbur's next volume, *Things of This World*, there is more play with words. "A Black November Turkey" contains word play of the sort we expect in the newer poems: the hens about the doomed turkey are "clocking," not clucking. They remind us of the bell Great Paul, the ticking of mutability, the winged chariot of Time.

Advice to a Prophet contains few puns in the better poems. In "Shame," a satiric poem, there is a pun which furthers the satire: "Scusi" is the capital city of the humble country, and its name reminds one of "Excuse me" in Romance languages. One of the best poems is "The Aspen and the Stream," in which the characters are the self-effacing, Faustian stream and the aspiring, Shelleyan aspen. Their languages help express their natures, for the aspen makes puns. The aspen tells the stream that he has lost the drift of what was being said. The language of word play has been transferred to the peripheries—satire, dialogue—of Wilbur's vision.

Such attention to language on the part of the reader raises the question of why one should pay so much attention to the poem. Analysis too close, too deep, will make anything seem profound. There must be a surface brilliance to attract the attention, to make the reader want to go deeper. Wilbur's method in his best poems is to force the reader's admiration by his sounds. These tonal effects give qualities of excellence to "Tywater," "After the Last Bulletins," "Piazza de Spagna, Early Morning," and "The Undead." The sounds of poems such as these evoke the sense, assuring that such poetry will endure.

THE POETRY OF WILDE

Author: Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

First published: *Poems*, 1881; *The Sphinx*, 1894; *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, by "C.3.3," 1898; *The Poems of Oscar Wilde*, 1906

Oscar Wilde's first literary reputation was made by his poems; the later success of his lectures, essays, stories, and plays obscured his reputation as a poet until the notoriety surrounding his last poem and last piece of writing, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The most important volume is his *Poems* of 1881, the others being the Newdigate Prize poem, "Ravenna"; *The Sphinx*, published in 1894, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, which appeared in 1898. The poems collected from periodicals by Robert Ross were added to the unpublished works to make up the modest collected edition of 1906. Wilde's poetry may be divided by form into long and short poems or by content into those which spiritualize bodily sensations and those which represent spiritual matters in terms of physical sensation.

The long poems of Oscar Wilde cover the twenty years between "Ravenna" and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Their chief use is not to tell a simple fable like those found in Wilde's short stories, but chiefly to celebrate a situation. There is a similar static quality in the short poems where the lack of argument induces a hortatory opening and a fading or frenzied close. "Ravenna," as is proper in a poem intended to win a prize in late nineteenth century Oxford, is written in modified early eighteenth century couplets, in which the favorite words seem to be "O," "yon" and "adieu," giving the poet a declamatory stance to excite energy, a post from which he can observe Ravenna's scenery, and a pathetic resolution. The success of the poem is the succession of enameled portraits of flowers and other pastoral properties needed to construct the contrast between the Italian and English landscapes which is the matter of the poem, all expressed without one false note in the verse or a sincere one in the expression:

So runs the perfect cycle of the year.
And so from youth to manhood do we
go,
And fall to weary days and locks of
snow.

It is something of a shock to find Oscar Wilde and Rudyard Kipling publishing short poems entitled "Ave Imperatrix" within a year of each other. Kipling's seven stanzas were "Written on the Occasion of the Attempt to Assassinate Queen Victoria in March 1882"; the "Queen" in his poem is obviously Victoria; Wilde's "Queen" is England, but his tone expresses similar jingoistic rejoicing in imperial power and some of the geographical references are identical, particularly when Wilde brings in Afghanistan (strictly Kipling territory) as evidence of imperial might. After many apostrophes ("O wasted dust! O senseless clay!") Wilde shoulders the White Man's Burden and grants that heavy losses in the Pathan wars are necessary to the destiny of his "Imperatrix": "Up the steep road must England go." But he cannot help regretting the loss of many fine young men. A similar public stance is held in poems like "To Milton" and "Louis Napoleon." But Wilde soon tired of these Miltonic and Wordsworthian imitations and imitated instead Rossetti in his Roman Catholic sonnets and Swinburne in his nature pieces.

Wilde's ear was remarkably true; like those of Swinburne his lines have melody but lack sense, particularly if poem is placed against poem, when the inconsistencies typical of Wilde become obnoxious. Not that such placing is a fair test, but when "the Holy One . . . shepherd of the Church of God" of "Urbs Sacra Aeterna" in the section entitled "Rosa Mystica" becomes a "Fra Giovanni bawling at the mass" of "The Burden of Itys," one questions the sincerity of both the

public poems and the private ones. Wilde's sincerity or his most deeply felt pose is contained in the long poems which glorify a naked pantheism that seems to place the sunny Italian body in the fresh fields of England. In that respect all but the last of his poems is a refinement of the first, "Ravenna," and the last, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, is a contradiction of such pieces as "Ave Imperatrix." His best known short poem is "Helas," which prefaces the 1881 volume and is usually regarded, like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as a form of Wilde's artistic credo; it begins with an anticipation of Lord Henry Wotton's training of Dorian:

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds
can play . . .

and ends with the unanswered question that haunts all Wilde's work:

. . . lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

Of the sonnets which make up the bulk of the short poems, those at the graves of Shelley and Keats are effective memorials, but the more characteristic and interesting are the "Impressions" and similar poems in the three sections titled "Wind Flowers," "Flowers of Gold," and "The Fourth Movement," in which Wilde is painting in clear, rich, and sophisticated color combinations. The best known of these "études in color" is "Symphony in Yellow," among the previously uncollected poems in the 1906 volume.

There are five long poems in the 1881 volume: "The Garden of Eros," "The Burden of Itys," "Charmides," "Panthea," and "Humanitad." Each is written in approximately the same stanza form of six lines, a quatrain plus a couplet, of varying pentameter and quadrameter meter: all five poems have the flowers, colors, and classical allusions and material of Tennyson's "Enone," and many echoes of a golden treasury of English verse;

but their most characteristic feature is the length to which Wilde could prolong the combined bookish and natural sensations, as he was later to prolong sensation and sensibility in *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The easiest to follow is "Charmides" because it tells the legend of the Athenian youth who made love to the naked statue of Athena one long night and was drowned by the goddess the next day for his presumption; in the second section his body is washed ashore on the Greek coast and an Oread, who falls in love with the dead youth, is also slain by Athena; in the third section the girl and the youth are revived by Proserpine and consummate their love in a passionate scene in Hades.

"The Garden of Eros" begins with English flowers, passes to classical myth, surveys English poetry as culminating in Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and concludes the June night of the poem with a return to the beauty of the flowers, all described in fresh images of striking sensuality:

Mark how the yellow iris wearily
Leans back its throat, as though it
would be kissed
By its false chamberer, the dragon-fly.

"The Burden of Itys" follows the same pattern, an invocation to the classic gods of field and forest to visit English fields and repeat their bacchanals:

O that some antique statue for one hour
Might wake to passion . . .

But the dream passes with the dawn. "Panthea" begins in the usual English pastoral setting, enumerates such attractive myths as those of Ganymede and Endymion, contrasts the lot of the poet's race to the gods'—"O we are born too late"—and reaches at last the consolation that in the end death will unite the past in "passions Hymeneal" with the earth which then becomes the "Kosmic Soul" of the conclusion. "Humanitad" is as personal a poem in its way as *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*: beginning in winter the poem laments the poet's inability to re-

spond to the approaching spring as he used to because he is now too experienced in passion and wise to the ways of the world. In the search for a meaning to life—

O for one grand unselfish life
To teach us what is Wisdom! . . .
To make the Body and the Spirit
one . . .

he looks past modern Italy to ancient Greece, to Wordsworth, and finally to Christ, at which point he resolves the dilemma by deciding to come down from his own Cross: "That which is purely human, that is Godlike, that is God."

The sexual fantasies of "Charmides" are more evident in "The Sphinx" and in *Salome*. "The Sphinx" is a sequence of thirteen short poems in four-line stanzas which begin and end with an invocation to the Sphinx imagined by the poet to be brooding at him from a corner of his room. He asks the Sphinx about her lovers and supplies a long catalogue of possibilities before he decides that Ammon filled the role; then he remembers the present state of the Sphinx and tells her to assemble the ruins of her old lovers and to leave him, as the dawn enters, because she awakens in him "each bestial sense . . . foul dreams of sensual life." This effect is certainly borne out in the poem, where Wilde's sense of color and form becomes fully tactile, passionate, and ultimately preposterous. One doubts whether in Wilde's time poetry could go

further without becoming obscene. His jail sentence put a stop to this kind of poetry and produced his last work.

The Ballad of Reading Gaol like "Charmides," tells a narrative of the hanging of a murderer for killing the woman he loved; the paradox of his fate and the correspondence Wilde saw to his own is, together with the realism, the source of the energy which carries the poem through six sections and contains more than one hundred six-line stanzas. In spite of repetitions induced by the stanzas Wilde kept adding to the poem, the ballad rhythm is rarely monotonous and the use of color even more startling than it was in Wilde's earlier verse: "little tent of blue," "scarlet coat," "yellow hole," "purple throat," "teeth of flame."

The first three sections narrate the six weeks spent by the subject of the elegy waiting to "swing"; the fourth describes the execution and in intimate and graphic detail shows its effect on the prisoners; the fifth section contains Wilde's reflection on the execution and on the meaning of prison as a place for repentance, a subject he covered more fully but equally indefinitely in *De Profundis*; the sixth section is a brief envoi or epilogue which repeats the central line of the poem: "all men kill the thing they love." This may be in accord with modern psychology; if Wilde was as utterly self-centered as he seems to have been, there could have been no truer epitaph for his own grave.

THE POETRY OF WILLIAMS

Author: William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

Principal published works: *Poems*, 1909; *The Tempers*, 1913; *Al Que Quierel*, 1917; *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*, 1920; *Sour Grapes*, 1921; *Spring and All*, 1922; *Collected Poems*, 1921-1931, 1934; *An Early Martyr and Other Poems*, 1935; *Adam and Eve & the City*, 1936; *The Complete Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, 1906-1938, 1938; *The Broken Span*, 1941; *The Wedge*, 1944; *Paterson* (Book One, 1946; Book Two, 1948; Book Three, 1949; Book Four, 1951; Book Five, 1958); *The Pink Church*, 1948; *The Collected Later Poems*, 1950; *The Collected Earlier Poems*, 1951; *The Desert Music and Other Poems*, 1954; *Journey to Love*, 1955; *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*, 1962

In the headnote to *Paterson*, William Carlos Williams described his view of the

function of poetry as a bare-handed answer to Greek and Latin. The deliberate

rejection of a received tradition, and reliance on crude native energy of intelligence, are characteristic of a poet who has from the start been aggressively American in his poetic themes and techniques. It is not going too far to state that Williams has in fact defined himself in his poetic identity by a series of rejections: as early as 1910 he had thrown over the sonnet and the iamb as dead molds from an English and not an American tradition, and set out in search of what he would later call the "measure" of the indigenous "American idiom." Inevitably this search meant the development of new themes and approaches, an intensive reliance on personal sensibility, and the justification of seemingly unpoetic and arbitrary materials—lists of ice-cream prices, the sounds of the sea-elephant and of trees in rain—the whole human barnyard Williams observed daily in his practice as a busy pediatrician in a New Jersey suburb.

A characteristic early poem, "Between Walls," demonstrates Williams' relentlessness in the process of taking up slack, of concentrating his poetic materials. In this short piece the absence of punctuation, the title entering the very syntax of the poem, and the remarkable pressure exerted on single words all tend to reify language and to de-emphasize the distinctions between words and things in poetic description. Ideas are in *things* is the informal refrain of *Paterson*, the long epic poem in five books in which Williams extends the early discontinuous imagism of a poem like "Between Walls" into a large discourse revolving around the single figure of a man as a city. Late in his career, image and discourse finally come together supremely in this poem on personal and national history, and in the splendid old man's love poem, "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," in the late volume, *Journey to Love*. And even in his famous early poem on a red wheelbarrow Williams had affirmed that much depends on the object under scrutiny, using emotional as well as descriptive language and exploding the restrictions of the Imagist

school by attempting to unite concepts and objects in a single discourse.

Paterson develops and makes explicit another, related cluster of speculations on the importance of place. This emphasis is implied in such poems as "Dedication for a Plot of Ground," "Franklin Square," and "Nantucket," and indeed it is implied in the anxious descriptive bent of all the early poems, but only in *Paterson* does it become a compelling argument against T. S. Eliot's contention that "place is only place." Like Wallace Stevens, Williams believes that place is all we have: there is no other place, no other experience, and so the poem will celebrate things for being and happening in themselves, just as it will praise the mind for now and then lighting on something significant. The point is that any man's experience, however seemingly unpoetic, is universal and valuable to the degree that it is understood in all its relevant detail. Williams accordingly states at the outset of *Paterson*, his long place-poem, that the attempt is to begin with particulars and then make them general. Following this method the poet is obliged to be a noticer, someone whose vision is at once accurate and clairvoyant.

A detailed sense of place, of community and connection, is all the more important amidst the violence and deracination which Williams observed in the lives of his patients, in the state of the country ("Impromptu: The Suckers" is a bitter attack on the injustice done to Sacco and Vanzetti), in our two world wars and a depression. Anticipating the extended metaphor of divorce in *Paterson*, divorce between lovers, friends, poets and their readers, mind and world, thing and thought, certain earlier poems like "It Is a Living Coral" and the collection titled *Spring and All* convey an acute sense of debasement.

The need for accurate observation is at one with the need for love in a world without theological sanctions: energy and the release of energy, the analogies between sexual experience and other modes of knowing such as vision, are at once

themes and techniques in Williams, who is one of those post-romantic poets for whom truth can lie only in the search for truth. In such a scheme no subject is too low, no juxtaposition too extravagant; the poem "Pastoral" looks, as do so many of the poems early and late, at sparrows, taking their unconscious ingenuousness as emblematic.

"Pastoral" is constructed as a haphazard montage, according to principles Williams may well have absorbed from his painter friends in Greenwich Village and Paris. According to this technique the position of images is almost as important as their content. Consecutive images are pulled ahead or back according to the lines of force of the surrounding images. Often Williams enforces a contrast of different orders of experience by such placement, setting emotional statements against descriptive ones, kinetic against static, honesty against pomposity. While Williams' themes remain fairly constant throughout his writing career, these techniques of concentration-by-omission, and of working for speed in the movement of poems, undergo continual change. The effect of simultaneity, analogous to the all but instant impact of a painting on a canvas, is something he early achieves by the montage construction, by forcing attention to new linguistic clusters in the line taken as a unit, by making extensive use of elipse, and run-on lines.

In working as it were within the space created by the overarching metaphor of a man as a city, *Paterson* represents a development of the same method of calculated juxtaposition, naturalizing as it does blocks of prose in a poetic setting so as to suggest that the sources of all writing are the same.

Williams abolishes the capital letters at

the beginning of each line. This gives the desired effect of placing enormous weight on the punctuation that remains, and the dash, the parenthesis, even the white spacing between words and lines carry a heavy freight of meaning. Thus every poem discovers its own form, a "measure" determined both by the subject at hand and by the breath-rhythm of the poet.

In the process of writing *Paterson* Williams discovered the three-tier line which he considered his own contribution to an American measure (he would not call it a formal metric, though he would say it possesses form). His 1955 volume, *Journey to Love*, draws upon and endlessly varies this line, as in "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower."

The vituperation and anger of the early poems turns often, in these later books, to gentleness, a celebration of a small circle of loved people and things; and in general Williams moves from his early concern with objects to a concern with actions, virtues, and broad scenes.

As a strictly secular poet, as a writer who has created genuine poems outside traditional metrics, as a theorist of "measure" and a detailed observer (especially in *Paterson*) of the debasement of the American scene, Williams has been widely influential: poets as diverse as Robert Lowell, Charles Olson, and Theodore Roethke have gone to school to Williams and pursued his lines of inquiry and technique. The art of immediacy, it seems, is more imitable and available than the hieratic, allusive poetry of a more sophisticated poet like T. S. Eliot. Future literary historians may well decide that this less "intelligent" poet is in fact more significantly influential than Eliot in directing the course of American poetry.

THE POETRY OF WITHER

Author: George Wither (1588-1667)

Principal published works: *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, 1611; *Fidelia*, 1615; *Wither's Motto*; *Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo*, 1621; *Faire-Virtue*, *The Mistresse of Philarete*, 1622; *Britain's Remembrancer*, 1628; *Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne*, 1635; *Heleluiah*; or *Britain's Second Remembrancer*, 1641

There is a story that when George Wither, an officer in the parliamentary forces during the English Civil War, was captured by the Royalists, he was in danger of being executed. But the Royalist and poet Sir John Denham is said to have interceded successfully for Wither on the ground that as long as Wither lived, Denham could not be accounted the worst poet in England. This story and the overwhelming quantity of his literary production—Wither claimed to have written eighty-six separate works by 1660—have done much over the ages to damage the poet's reputation. The truth is that at his best Wither is a fine poet.

After two years at Oxford, Wither was in London in 1605 studying law. Among his first publications was a group of poems, mostly sonnets in the Shakespearean form, titled *Prince Henry's Obsequies*, published in 1612. This collection, occasioned by the death of Prince Henry, was largely courtly in tone, as was *Epithalamia*, which appeared in the next year, a volume of gratulatory poems on the wedding of Princess Elizabeth. However, Wither's most sincere feelings were not with the life of the court and the city, which, it appears, he had learned to loathe. This is the burden of his first important and successful volume, *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, a collection of scathing satires.

The book went through four editions in the year it was published. Wither's purpose he says, was to "teach my rough satiric rimes/To be as mad and idle as the times." He divided the volume into two parts, the first containing sixteen satires which in safe general terms denounced such depraving passions as Revenge, Ambition, Lust. The second part contained four satires "Of the Vanity, Inconstancy, Weakness and presumption of Men." These poems were rather more specific. Among other things the poet condemned in strong words the new knights, vain preachers, and dishonest lawyers of the universities. He also attacked the court and the courtiers, and in a poem called "The Scourge" he attacked

the Lord Chancellor. Moreover, Wither managed to disagree with a recent policy of truce with Spain. On the positive side, Wither fulsomely praised contemporary poets and drama. The style of the satires is witty and biting, and they are written in pleasingly fluid rhyming couplets. The major result of the book as far as Wither was concerned, however, was several months imprisonment in Marshalsea.

During his imprisonment, the poet wrote, among his less important works, *The Shepherd's Hunting*, a collection of five pastorals. The fourth of these poems contains a well-known passage in praise of poetry. One of the major purposes of this volume, however, was to justify allegorically his *Abuses Stript and Whipt*. Wither's technique was to use the traditional pastoral, the allegorical dialogue form best known in English in Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar*. Adopting the name of Philarete ("lover of virtue") a name he used for himself in some of his later poetry also, Wither pleaded his case to another Shepherd, Willy.

After his release from prison, primarily due to the intervention of Princess Elizabeth, Wither published his *Fidelia*. This book is made up largely of a lengthy Ovidian elegy in the form of a letter in which the languishing heroine complains to her unfaithful lover. *Fidelia* is important chiefly because it contains the first of several publications of Wither's best known lyric. This poem, based on the traditional topic, "Shall I, wasting in despair,/Die because a woman's fair," has an untraditional twist. Instead of developing the old Petrarchan idea of the hopeless lover, or the bitter, spurned lover, Wither speaks of love as a reciprocal matter: he will love as he is loved, no matter who the woman is. The poem concludes:

Great, or good, or kind, or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe,
I will die, ere she shall grieve:
If she slight me when I woo
I can scorn and let her go,

For if she be not for me
What care I for whom she be?

The best single volume of love poetry by Wither is his *Fair-Virtue, The Mistress of Philarete*. Besides reprinting "Shall I, wasting," this volume contains a number of other excellent lyrics which have carried Wither's reputation down to our time and which have had much to do with establishing him, not at all correctly, as being essentially a poet of "Sweet and open pastorals" who lived in a poetic land of enchantment peopled by dairy maids as fresh as strawberries. There is some truth in this idea, but considering Wither's biting moralistic satire and his later Puritan religious poetry, it is an insufficient definition for the reader who would understand the poet's overall accomplishment.

At any rate, among the best poems in *Fair-Virtue* is "I wandered out awhile agone," a skillful bit of good-humored cynicism in which the poet plays, in several stanzas, on his own name. The poet has wandered to a place inhabited by two lovely young ladies who move him to less than virtuous thoughts:

Such equal sweet Venus gave,
That I preferr'd not either,
And when for love I thought to crave
I know not well of whether . . .

In "A Christmas Carol" we find a poem full of vivid detail and the joy of the Christmas season:

Now all our neighbours' chimneys
smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning;
Their ovens they with baked meats
choke,
And all their spits are turning.

But even in this poem, Wither does not forget his Puritanical will to satire: "Good farmers in the country nurse/the poor," but "Some landlords spend their money worse,/On lust and pride in London." Finally must be mentioned the

arch little "Sonnet upon a stolen kiss," in which the lover worries that if he steals a kiss from his sleeping lover she will wake and grow angry. He concludes, "Well, if she do, I'll back restore that one,/and twenty hundred thousand more for loan."

A year before he had published *Fair-Virtue*, Wither had published another long satire that once again put him in prison. Once again the poem was a tremendous success, selling thirty thousand copies, as Wither tells us. This satire, written in over a thousand pentameter couplets, was called *Wither's Motto; nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo* ("Neither Have I, nor Want I, Nor Care I"). The poem develops a statement of the attitude to life expressed in the title. With this poem and *Fair-Virtue* ended the period of what Wither later called his *Juvenilia*. The rest of his poetry is essentially religious in intent and subject, for the poet, though he was an aristocrat and was at first a loyal subject of the king, became increasingly involved in affairs of the Puritan party.

In 1622-1623 appeared his *Hymnes and Songs of the Church*. More important was his *Britain's Remembrancer*, a long poem of some historical value in which Wither recounts his experiences during the plague time in London in 1625. Interspersed with the vivid descriptions are denunciations of the wickedness of the times and prophecies of the disasters about to fall on England.

Then in 1635 the poet was asked to write a series of emblems (moralized caption poems) for a volume of allegorical prints to be put out by a London publisher. The book was published as a *Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne*; among the more memorable of the emblem poems is "When with a serious musing I behold."

Finally, Wither's finest religious poetry was published in *Heleluiah; or Britain's Second Remembrancer* (1641). Among the best of these poems are the lullaby "Sleep, baby, sleep, what ails my dear"; "Song for Lovers" ("Come, sweet heart.

come, let us prove"); "Song for the Hap-
pily married" ("Since they in singing take

delight"); and "Song for the Shepherd"
("Renowned men their herds to keep").

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

Author: William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Principal published works: *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, 1793; *Lyrical Bal-
lads*, 1798, 1800; *Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807; *The Excursion*, 1814; *Poems and The
White Doe of Rylstone*, 1815; *Peter Bell and The Waggoner*, 1819; *The River Duddon*,
1820; *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, 1822; *Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems*, 1835; *Poems
Chiefly of Early and Late Years*, 1842; *The Prelude*, 1850

The most original genius of his age, William Wordsworth attacked the poetic diction and mannerisms fashionable in the mediocre poetry of the late eighteenth century, but his earliest poetry abounds in the personifications, hackneyed expressions, and apostrophes that he came to dislike most. His earliest poems, contained in *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, reveal the careful observation of nature that he excelled in during his most productive and most creative years between 1797 and 1807. He lacked only the discipline and the vision that came to him after he discarded Godwinism and the revolutionary fervor of his youth.

In 1797 he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the strongest influence on his maturing style and philosophy, and entered the period of his greatest work. Through Coleridge he discovered the associational psychology of David Hartley and discarded William Godwin's rationalism. As a result of his new interest in psychology, he chose peasants, children, and mental defectives as subjects for his poetry. This choice marked a break with the decadent neo-classicism of his minor contemporaries. Many of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, written in conjunction with Coleridge, thus dealt with subjects from common life in order to reveal the unsophisticated operations of the human mind. For this publication Coleridge was to have written poems in the manner of "The Ancient Mariner," in which the supernatural was made believable, while Wordsworth agreed to write on basic

human emotions directly and sincerely expressed in ordinary life. The volume was dominated by Wordsworth, however, and when the public encountered such poems as "We Are Seven," "The Idiot Boy," and "The Thorn," it was shocked. The reviewers were simply unable to accept such passages as the opening lines of "The Thorn":

There is a Thorn—it looks so old,
In truth, you'd find it hard to say
How it could ever have been young,
It looks so old and grey.

But much more important in *Lyrical Ballads* was Wordsworth's famous group of poems on nature, the first truly "Wordsworthian" poems. Everywhere in nature he found harmony and an active force that he identified with God. He felt no separation between Man and nature, all things joining in harmony. In "Tintern Abbey," for example, he gave full and lasting expression to the Romantic concept of nature as divinity:

. . . I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often-
times
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample
power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the
joy
Of elevated thoughts. . . .

Nature was to him alive, powerful, and healthy; it was the panacea for man's mechanical urban life. Only the man who

turned to nature, who felt the joy of nature, could find health in escape from the stagnation of contemporary life.

During the bitterly cold winter of 1798-1799, Wordsworth and his sister were isolated in Goslar, Germany, without books and friends. There he discovered a new type of poetry. Because of his circumstances, he fell back on his inner resources; he fed his imagination upon recollections of England until he was seized by emotions similar to those he had felt years before when the experience was immediate. These newly created emotions seemed to him to overflow, and from this artificially induced emotional experience he created poetry. He described this discovery in the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, where he wrote that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on. . . ." In such a mood he composed many of his finest poems; for example, "There Was a Boy," "Lucy Grey," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and "My Heart Leaps Up."

The famous Preface in which he described his newly derived theory of poetry was meant to be an answer to the critical opposition to the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, but it was much more. Here Wordsworth stated the doctrines upon which he built his greatest (and his worst) poetry. Negatively, he wanted to end "the deluge of idle and extravagant stories in verse." Positively, he attempted to choose incidents and situations from common life, to relate them in simple language, to give poetry a worthy purpose, and to emphasize genuine feeling. Although Coleridge (a little piqued be-

cause Wordsworth attributed these doctrines to him) unmercifully attacked these doctrines in *Biographia Literaria* in 1817, they were essentially sound and readily acceptable to the English public. Much of Wordsworth's poetry, like "Michael" and "Lines Written in Early Spring," is grounded in these doctrines and gave them additional popularity. But these doctrines, when followed too mechanically, led to dullness and flatness, the two faults most often found in Wordsworth's poetry.

The year 1802 was a landmark in Wordsworth's career. Momentous events both in his personal life (a trip to France to see his illegitimate daughter) and in European politics (Napoleon's absolute rule in France and the beginning of the Napoleonic War) widened his creative horizons. Also, his discovery of Milton's sonnets inspired him, and he began to compose in a more majestic and musical style. His visit to Calais to visit Annette Vallon and his daughter made him intimately aware of the dangers of Napoleon's tyranny, and with renewed faith in the causes of liberty he began a series of sonnets. He now believed that Nature worked through man in an unending struggle for freedom. Several of these sonnets—"London, 1802," "The World Is Too Much With Us," "To Toussaint L'Ouverture," "It Is a Beauteous Evening Calm and Free"—are among his most famous poems. His plea to return to moral virtue and to establish ordered liberty is nowhere better expressed than in these lines from "London, 1802":

We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom,
power.

These sonnets established Wordsworth as the pre-eminent poet of English patriotism.

In the spring of 1802, Wordsworth began to fear that his imaginative vision might be failing. Because to him the imagination was the supreme guide to free-

dom and to morality, his fear led him to re-examine his concept of the role of the human imagination. This he does in the famous, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality as Recollected from Early Childhood." From Plato and the Neo-Platonists he received the notion that the child's dreamlike moments were actually carry-overs from a pre-natal spiritual existence and that maturation gradually caused the ecstatic vision to fade completely away. But the doctrine of pre-existence led him to the pessimistic conclusion that maturity was a time of inevitable grief. He left the poem unfinished until 1804, when he added the last three stanzas. In the addition he reaffirmed the child's loss of vision, but he added that the adult has wisdom, "the philosophic mind," which gives to man "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." This resolution, though not the most optimistic, promised some hope to the poet who felt his own powers dwindling. Still, it marked a profound change in his view of nature, as is apparent from his revisions made in *The Prelude* during 1839, for now he placed the joyful contemplation of nature in the past, forever lost to him.

The "Ode to Duty," also written in 1804, clarified his new position. Duty replaced the rapturous visions and freedom of youth to the extent that he thought of the supreme power as moral law, not nature. In this poem Wordsworth accepted the stoic creed of Seneca and Kant according to which peace of mind is self-imposed inner control. The tragic death of his brother in 1805 brought Wordsworth's earlier and later moods into sharp antagonism. In "Elegiac Stanzas" he renounced the visions of his youth and faced the harsh reality of experience, and in "The Happy Warrior" he confirmed his newly adopted stoicism. With these two poems Wordsworth passed into the final phase of his career.

The major work of his decline was *The Excursion*. With the gradual loss of his inspiration, he became more and

more conservative, accepted Christian orthodoxy, and developed the tendency to be dogmatic and sententious. He became a sage rather than a poet. These changes were marked by a change in his poetic technique, to the extent that his later poetry not only lacked inspiration but was often dull and unnecessarily heavy. These characteristics are reflected in *The Excursion*. This long poem, second in length only to *The Prelude*, was intended to be the second and middle part of a long work to be called *The Recluse: or Views on Man, on Nature, and on Human Life*, a great philosophical poem which he never finished. Despite the inferiority of the majority of *The Excursion*, there are some admirable flashes such as the moving story of Margaret in Book I, but the poem as a whole is a marked decline from the great poetry of 1797-1807. After this poem Wordsworth wrote little that was truly great, although he reached a peak of artistic and metrical virtuosity in the Ecclesiastical Sonnets. But the radical young men who had defended him in his youth had become more conservative adults or, like Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron, had died years before, and the new generation of young poets thought of him as a "lost leader." He remained popular and was buried in Westminster Abbey when he died, but even when he received the laureateship in 1843, his popularity was primarily based on the poems of his earlier greatness.

The problem that Wordsworth's poetry presents to a modern reader is relatively simple: he wrote too much when he was not inspired and threw too little in the fire. Too often his verse is pedestrian and prosy, even dull. A sense of humor might have saved some of his poetry, but he showed little humor, especially in the poetry after *The Excursion*. Still he presents us with a formidable canon, and few people would deny the greatness of his early poems. His best work has a calm dignity that best expresses itself in the unadorned beauty of a cleanly chiseled

line, in such lines as the following stanza from the "Lucy Poems":

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

His worst work is marred by bathos. His view of nature was stimulating enough to save the young John Stuart Mill from committing suicide and continues to speak to the problems of a mechanical age; his observations on the human mind—though outdated by the development of depth psychology—remain vital and

revealing. Matthew Arnold's praise of Wordsworth in his famous reply to Leslie Stephen's criticism is still the most judicious:

"To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work, to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until this has been done, Wordsworth . . . has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has been done, he will make his way best, not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power."

THE POETRY OF WYATT AND SURREY

Authors: Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517?-1547)
First published: Poems included in Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*, 1557

Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, are generally considered the inaugurators of the golden age of English poetry in the reign of Elizabeth I. Both men were educated in the humanistic tradition, and they early became familiar with the polished lyric poetry of the Italians and the French. They attempted to demonstrate in their own works that English, too, was a language flexible and elegant enough for court poetry. Skillful experimenters with metrics, they imitated a number of the verse forms popular on the Continent, including the sonnet, ottava rima, terza rima, and the rondeau. Many of the lyrics of both poets are based upon the Petrarchan conventions of the cruel, scornful lady and her forlorn, rejected lover; a number of the sonnets are, in fact, either translations or close adaptations of Petrarch's works.

While Wyatt and Surrey are most often mentioned as precursors of Elizabethan poetry, students of their works have pointed out that their poetry is, in fact, quite different from that of Sidney, Spenser, and their followers. Typical "golden" poetry makes its effect through rich language and imagery, while in the

work of Wyatt and Surrey there is a directness, a simplicity, and an awareness of the natural world that seems closer to Chaucer and his contemporaries than to the Renaissance poets. They form, in a sense, a bridge between the medieval world and the Elizabethan Age.

Surrey was for generations considered the more accomplished poet, but Wyatt, who was almost fifteen years older, is for many modern readers the more rewarding. His meters are less polished than Surrey's, but the human voice speaks through this very lack of smoothness. The best lines in his characteristically rugged, dramatic style have been compared with the poetry of John Donne. One sonnet begins forcefully:

Farewell Love and all thy laws for
ever:
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no
more.

Like Donne, Wyatt often conveys a strong sense of personal emotion in his works, even in those which are translated from the Italian and full of the conventional poses of the sonneteer.

In several of the sonnets the power comes from abruptly stated paradoxes.

The monosyllables of the following lines are especially effective:

I find no peace, and all my war is
done;
I fear and hope; I burn, and freeze
like ice;
I fly above the wind, yet can I not
arise;
And nought I have, and all the world
I season.

The personal voice sounds most strongly in Wyatt's three satires on the materialism and folly of his times. These poems are, like the sonnets, adaptations of Italian and classical models, but they are not often marred by the awkward inversions of some of the shorter poems. The diction of the satires is direct; Wyatt, the disillusioned courtier speaks, emphasizing the ultimate futility of man's quest for wealth and earthly power.

In "Of the mean and sure estate," Wyatt uses the beast fable in the manner of medieval poets like Chaucer and Langland, recounting the familiar tale of the poor country mouse who visits her city-dwelling sister, expecting to spend the rest of her days feasting on rich food in comfortable lodgings. She has not, however, reckoned with the presence of the household cat, and after one encounter she returns terrified to her frugal but secure existence at home. Wyatt draws his moral in the concluding passage:

O wretched minds, there is no gold
that may
Grant that you seek, no war, no peace,
no strife.
No, no, although thy head were hooped
with gold,
Sergeant with mace, with hauberk,
sword, nor knife
Cannot repulse the care that follow
should.
Each kind of life hath with him his
disease.

The satire on court life is still more scathing. Wyatt, protesting passionately the hypocrisy of the society in which he

had spent much of his life, gives his reasons for finally withdrawing from it:

I cannot frame my tune to feign,
To cloak the truth, for praise without
desert
Of them that list all vice for to retain.

I cannot speak and look like a saint,
Use wiles for wit, and make deceit a
pleasure;
Call craft counsel, for lucre still to
paint;

I cannot wrest the law to fill the coffer
With innocent blood to feed myself fat,
And do most hurt where that most help
I offer.

The third satire is a dialogue between a practical-minded narrator and a lively courtier who "trots still up and down, and never rests, but running day and night." When the courtier defends this way of life, saying that inactivity would be death to him, the narrator notes that his greatest problem will be finding money for his activities, and he makes several suggestions that show Wyatt's contempt for the values of his society. The courtier may profitably lie, steal, deceive an old man in his dotage and marry his wealthy widow, however old and ugly she may be; comfort may be found elsewhere. Or he may play Pandarus for the suitors of pretty relatives—for a price. The courtier here interrupts to say that he would not exchange his honest name for any amount of gold, and the narrator, incredulous, predicts the future of all who care for reputation:

Nay, then, farewell! And if thou care
for shame,
Content thee then with honest poverty,
With free tongue what thee mislikes
to blame,
And for thy truth sometime adversitie:
And there withall this thing I shall
thee give—
In this world now little prosperity,
And coin to keep as water in a sieve.

Wyatt's greatest poetic gift revealed itself neither in the Petrarchan sonnet nor in the satires, but in the charming lyrics

he wrote to be sung before courtly audiences. His brief stanzas and simple refrains have the fluency that many of his sonnets lack, and his temperament seems to have lent itself admirably to both the melancholy complaints and the cynical wit of the forsaken lover. The grace and dignity of such poems as the following can be very moving.

Forget not yet the tried intent,
Of such a truth as I have meant,
My great travail, so gladly spent,
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet when first began
The weary life ye know, since when
The suit, the service, none can tell,
Forget not yet.

In a similar mood is another frequently anthologized lyric, where again the simplicity of the language and even the lack of regularity in the meter convey emotion. The first stanza, which begins "They flee from me that sometime did me seek," pictures birds fluttering about the poet's chamber, while a second verse transforms one of these wild creatures into a beautiful woman who embraces him. Almost as if he were awaking from deep sleep the poet muses:

It was no dream; I lay broad waking.
But all is turned thorough my gentleness,
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go, of her goodness,
And she also to use newfangledness.
But since that I so kindly am served,
I would fain know what she hath deserved.

Wyatt's lyrics encompass a variety of meters and tones, and many others could be quoted to illustrate the many ways he treated his favorite theme, the sorrows of unrequited love.

Surrey followed Wyatt in using both Continental and classical models, increasing the flexibility of the language as he mastered various poetic meters. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the succeed-

ing age was the blank verse which he adapted from the Italian for his translation of parts of Vergil's *Aeneid*; his unrhymed iambic pentameter lines do not have the majestic flow of Marlowe's or Shakespeare's dramatic poetry, but in attempting to create a smooth narrative meter Surrey made a real step forward. His version of Book II begins:

They whisted all, with fixed face at-
tent,
When Prince Aeneas from the royal
seat
Thus gan to speak: "O Queen, it is
thy will
I should renew a woe cannot be told,
How that the Greeks did spoil and
overthrow
The Phrygian wealth and wailful realm
of Troy:
Those ruthfull things that I my self
beheld,
And whereof no small part fell to my
share.

Surrey's second major contribution was his modification of the Italian sonnet form with its division into octave and sestet and its extremely demanding rhyme scheme. He developed a pattern very close to the three quatrains and couplet of the Shakespearian sonnet. Typical of his treatment of this verse form is a poem that reveals his sensitivity to nature, a quality that distinguishes him from Wyatt:

The soote season that bud and bloom
forth brings
With green hath clad the hill and eke
the vale,
The nightingale with feathers new she
sings,
The turtle to her make hath told her
tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now
springs,
The hart hath hung his old head on
the pale,
The buck in brake his winter coat he
flings,
The fishes float with new repaired
scale,
The adder all her slough away she
slings,

The swift swallow pursueth the flyes
 small,
 The busy bee her honey now she
 mings,—
 Winter is worn, that was the flowers'
 bale:
 And thus I see, among these pleasant
 things
 Each care decays—and yet my sorrow
 springs.

Most of Surrey's sonnets are typical laments of forsaken lovers, smoother in meter and language than Wyatt's, but generally less moving.

While modern readers have focused their attention on the sonnets, lyrics, and satires of both Wyatt and Surrey, it must be noted that one of the verse forms Surrey often and Wyatt occasionally used was the jog-trot meter, the poulter's measure, a twelve-syllable line followed by a fourteen-syllable one. Surrey handled it as skillfully as possible, varying stresses and pauses to keep the singsong rhythm from becoming oppressive, but no matter how well handled, this was not a verse form for great poetry. One of the most appealing examples of Surrey's work in this meter is "Lady Surrey's Lament for Her Absent Lord," written by the poet while he was serving with the English army in Boulogne. He imagines his wife dreaming that he has returned.

Another time, the same doth tell me
 he is come,
 And playing, where I shall him find,
 with T., his little son.
 So forth I go apace, to see that life-
 some sight,
 And with a kiss, me thinks I say,
 "Now welcome home, my knight;
 Welcome, my sweet, alas! the stay
 of my welfare;
 Thy presence bringeth forth a truce
 betwixt me and my care."

Two of Surrey's poems show his particular talents clearly. "Prisoned in Windsor, He Recounteth His Pleasure There Passed," written in the iambic pentameter quatrains of Wyatt's satires, is a poignant reminiscence of the happy

days of the poet's youth, spent at Windsor Castle as the companion of the Earl of Richmond, the illegitimate son of King Henry VIII. Surrey draws a vivid picture of the life of the two boys, recalling

The gravel ground, with sleeves tied
 on the helm,
 On foaming horse, with swords and
 friendly hearts,
 With cheer, as though one should an-
 other overwhelm,
 Where we have fought, and chased oft
 with darts;
 With silver drops the mead yet spread
 for ruth,
 In active games of nimbleness and
 strength,
 Where we did strain, trained with
 swarms of youth,
 Our tender limbs that yet shot up in
 length.

The poem concludes with Surrey's lament for his boyhood friend, now dead; his grief at his imprisonment is lessened by the memory of his greater loss.

Another of Surrey's outstanding works is his elegy "Of the death of Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder," a tribute to the character of a man whom he certainly admired, whether or not he knew him well. Many phrases stand out as particularly apt, characterizing the older poet both as a fine individual and as the pattern of the Renaissance courtier. Surrey's estimate of Wyatt as a poet is doubtless hyperbolic, but it reveals his sense of debt to him:

A hand that taught what might be
 said in rhyme,
 That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit,
 A mark the which (unparfited, for
 time)
 Some may approach, but never none
 shall hit.

The devoutly Christian conclusion follows the typical elegiac pattern, revealing both grief for personal loss and joy in the elevation of the dead man for all eternity:

But to the heavens that simple soul is
 fled,

Which left with such as covet Christ
to know
Witness of faith that never shall be
dead;
Sent for our health, but not received
so.
Thus for our guilt this jewel have we
lost:
The earth, his bones; the heavens pos-
sess his ghost.

Both poets composed metrical versions of parts of the Bible. Surrey, in particular, adapted passages to apply to his own desperate situation. Many of his Biblical poems were written while he was in the tower awaiting trial and the execution he gradually realized was inevitable. The recurrent theme of these works is the futility of his lifelong search for happiness in worldly pleasures and success and his present resignation to his fate and reconciliation with God.

Surrey's many love lyrics show a facility that approaches Wyatt's in the use of varied stanza forms. His poems in this

manner lack some of the emotional power of his predecessor's work, but they are nonetheless pleasing:

Give place, ye lovers here before
That spent your boasts and brags in
vain,
My lady's beauty passeth more
The best of yours, I dare well sayn,
Than doth the sun the candle-light,
Or brightest day the darkest night.

It is difficult to assess the contributions of Wyatt and Surrey to succeeding generations, but they certainly encouraged the vogue for court poetry, and they paved the way for the development of English as a poetic language by men like Sidney and Spenser. However, the two poets should be read today not for their historical significance, but rather for the dignity and the quiet appeal of their own work. While they rank among the near-great English poets rather than among the supreme masters, each has his own strength and lasting appeal.

THE PONDER HEART

Type of work: Novella

Author: Eudora Welty (1909-)

Time: The present

Locale: Clay, a small town in Mississippi

First published: 1953

Principal characters:

MISS EDNA EARL PONDER, the proprietor of a small family hotel

UNCLE DANIEL PONDER, her uncle who loves to give things away

BONNIE DEE PEACOCK PONDER, his "trial" wife

Reading any of Miss Welty's books, one is always tempted to contrast her treatment of her material with the treatment accorded the same sort of material by her fellow Mississippian, William Faulkner. Such a contrast is never to the disadvantage of either author, since their viewpoints are diametrically opposed. Each is legitimate; each is unique. Both put their characters in a locale that is easily distinguishable as the slightly seedy, much ingrown, certainly picturesque country of the Deep South. Both concentrate on characters that are slightly off the

norm, the kind that are excused by their fellow townsmen because they are familiar and loved. But where Faulkner was likely to find tragedy, Eudora Welty can find a gentle comedy.

Miss Welty has a splendid knack of drawing her people and her towns so that the reader is tempted to fit names to them from his own knowledge and experience. Her people, her towns, her country really are Mississippi, but the tales she tells of them are not necessarily limited by the locale. In *The Ponder Heart*, for instance, her story of the largesse of the

slightly simple-minded Uncle Daniel Ponder, the loving kindness of his townsmen, and the simplicity of his "trial" wife, Bonnie Dee, is not strictly limited to Southern characters. It might just as well be the tale of people in any small town. Basically, it is the story of the unfortunate in this world who have no clear way of understanding one another.

Most of Eudora Welty's work has been with the short story. *The Ponder Heart* might be called a novella, a very short novel. Actually, it is a breathless monologue throughout, done by Miss Edna Earl Ponder, proprietor of a small family hotel and niece to Uncle Daniel, whose protector against the world she has become.

Uncle Daniel, rich as Croesus and correspondingly generous, was not very bright as the world rates people, but he was impressive-looking and neat as a pin. He invariably wore spotless white suits, a red bow tie, and carried a huge Stetson hat just swept off his head. Held under his father's thumb until he was mature, he had little chance to be as generous, as his conscience dictated. He had given Edna Earl the hotel she ran, but his father had been glad to get rid of that. The cattle and fields he gave away were easily retrieved. People liked him because he always gave something away, even if it was only small change; but he always felt alone.

After his father's death, Edna Earl was responsible for him. She felt fairly safe about his giving things away as long as he was unconcerned about money. His father had always given him an allowance of three dollars a week. She continued that practice with no objection from Uncle Daniel because he was happy to have a little change in his pocket. His desire to give things to people made a wonderful topic of conversation for Edna Earl to discourse on with the traveling salesmen. Stories of Uncle Daniel involved the whole town and most of the surrounding countryside.

One day Uncle Daniel escaped Edna

Earl long enough to take a new little salesgirl at the 5 & 10 as his second bride. Edna Earl was rather reticent about his first wife's leaving him, though there seemed to be no rancor on either side. Since Uncle Daniel assured her that his second wife was just "on trial," Edna Earl had to sit back and see what would happen. Bonnie Dee Peacock Ponder, a little piece of white trash, held Uncle Daniel enthralled for five years before she disappeared. He always claimed she looked good enough to eat and she could cut his hair better than anyone had ever done before.

Edna Earl, in telling this story of *The Ponder Heart*, prepared her listener, a traveling salesman guest in her hotel, for the change in Uncle Daniel since the salesman last saw him. As headlong as the tale is, the reader is not too hard pressed to believe that Edna Earl might have crammed it all in just before dinner. There is the picture of Uncle Daniel as he was, of his married life, and of his most recent experiences. In the telling, Edna Earl becomes as clear as Uncle Daniel. She is the last respectable member of a family disintegrating; she is conscious of her dignity and jealous of the position she wishes for Uncle Daniel. She feels responsible for making things run, whether it is the rummage sale every week for the Negroes or Uncle Daniel's life. She wants things to run her way, however, and is not shy in demanding her way from the servants, the lawyers, the shopkeepers, or even the judge. She deplores the fact that the town is no longer on a through route, but she loves it. She despises the Peacock family as trash, but she does her duty by them because Uncle Daniel married one of them. Miss Welty brings in everyone and everything in town, every accent, every eccentricity, until the reader feels perfectly at home in Clay. If one begins to doubt that anyone in Clay is perfectly normal, that seems natural too.

Edna Earl's monologue covers the hunt for Bonnie Dee, her return, her turning

Uncle Daniel out of his own house, her wholesale purchase of useless things (like the washer she put on the front porch before the house was wired for electricity), her sudden death, and the trial of Uncle Daniel for her murder.

As a bribe to bring Bonnie Dee back home after her disappearance, Edna Earl told Uncle Daniel that Bonnie Dee would have to have an allowance. No one had thought to give her one during her five-year "trial" marriage. Uncle Daniel reacted slowly to the thought of money, but he reacted surely. Not until the day of the trial did he think of the wealth he had in the bank. Apparently, it was a passing thought which that day prompted him to go to the bank early when only a clerk, who had never been warned to withhold money from Uncle Daniel, was the only person there. He withdrew every cent he had, padded his pockets with the money, and went to the trial.

The murder trial brought together the whole town and all of Bonnie Dee's huge family from the country. Edna Earl and a lawyer intended to take care of the case themselves without letting Uncle Daniel speak in his own defense. They relied too

much on the obedience he had always paid them and neglected to take into account the feeling he would naturally have at being, for once, the focal point in a big situation. Uncle Daniel listened carefully to all the witnesses and then, without warning, took over the trial. Throwing bills right and left, pressing them upon all the people, he immediately convinced the jury of his innocence and even softened the hearts of Bonnie Dee's family.

But afterwards he was more alone than ever, isolated as he always would be because people never had understood him and because now he had nothing more to give them.

Miss Welty has the happy faculty of presenting her characters sympathetically, but she loses no sense of realism in doing so. She looks fondly upon her townspeople, and with a sense of humor, but she sees them plainly. Her pen, her eyes, and her ears are all bent to the same task, so that she writes of what she has seen and heard, using a fine sense of discrimination in detail. As a result, she writes what the reader can see and hear too. This visit to Clay, home of Uncle Daniel Ponder, is like a return to a place long remembered.

THE POORHOUSE FAIR

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Updike (1932-)

Time: The 1980's

Locale: The Diamond County Home for the Aged, in New Jersey

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

JOHN HOOK,

BILLY GREGG,

GEORGE LUCAS,

MARTHA, his wife

ELIZABETH HEINEMAN, and

MRS. MORTIS, inmates in a home for the aged

MR. CONNER, the prefect

BUDDY, his assistant

TED, a teen-age delivery boy

At a time when literary excellence is too frequently measured by bulk and most first novels testify to little more than

the immaturity of their writers, *The Poorhouse Fair* stands out as a work of great delicacy and precision in its blend-

ing of substance and structure. The point for praise is not the fact that John Updike has deliberately chosen to write a short first novel but that his beautifully realized insights and the brevity of the book testify to his imaginative self-sufficiency and his control over material that would set many writers to page after page of furious prose. Where another novelist might have tried to achieve similar effects in the mass and weight of some sprawling, documented design, John Updike presents a single animate image of a small complex of lives against a background in which implication, symbol, paradox, and irony gradually transform the mere lifelikeness of more naturalistic fiction into a vision of life rearranged to significant form and charged with moral meaning.

The book is short but far from slight in its resonance and depth. Readers tired of the affectedly tough, the oversensitive, or romantic escapism through personality in modern fiction sometimes ask this question: Why don't writers try to show what is really going on in the world about them—things like the corruption of power, the perversion of idealism, the conflict between individual will and social pattern, the loss of understanding, or identity, of belief? In his imaginatively conceived and poetically styled novel the author takes the indirect course of fable and symbolism to do exactly that. The story he tells is a ruefully perceptive parable on the cold comforts of a planned society and stubborn humanity's saving grace of individuality.

Like all good novels, *The Poorhouse Fair* is a metaphor of life. That is, what is here dramatically presented in terms of character and scene and what is figuratively implied in the confrontation of the cranky innocence, tested wisdom, and moral rigor of the aged by the impersonal benevolence of bureaucratic statism is contained in a single image which is both a picture of the world and the configuration of the novel itself. The meaning of John Updike's fable is plain. To be hu-

man is to possess a moral vision which makes the human effort seem worth while, and to be a man is to accept the responsibility for one's thoughts and deeds.

The time of the novel is projected, with sly subtlety, into the future, during the administration of President Lowenstein, and the action unfolds in the events of one day in the lives of the inmates of the Diamond County Home for the Aged, in New Jersey. It is the day of the annual fair, when these elderly men and women set up stands and sell such homemade products as quilts, candy, and peach-stone carvings to the visitors from nearby communities. But this year the great day gets off to a bad start. John Hook, a ninety-four-year-old ex-schoolteacher, and Billy Gregg, a seventy-year-old retired electrician, discover that the porch chairs have been given name tags so that hereafter each inmate will occupy only the chair assigned to him. This latest action by Conner, the prefect of the institution, provides an opportunity for protest.

As the morning passes, misunderstandings and misadventures add to Conner's burden of do-gooding humanitarianism. When Gregg introduces a diseased stray cat into the grounds, the prefect orders Buddy, his adoring assistant, to shoot the animal. Ted, a teen-age truck driver delivering cases of Pepsi-Cola for the fair, knocks down part of a stone wall. A pet parakeet belonging to Mrs. Lucas, the wife of George Lucas, a former real-estate salesman, gets loose in the infirmary. When rain threatens to ruin the fair, and the inmates take refuge in the community sitting room, Hook and Conner argue the ideals of an older America of faith and idealism against the theories of scientific determinism and social perfectibility.

Without losing their identities as very real people Hook and Conner drift almost imperceptibly into their roles as spokesmen for meaningful opposites in man's conception of the good life. Hook

is a gentle, meditative man who can look back to the days of Taft and Mark Hanna in a period of greater political freedom, economic uncertainty, pride of craftsmanship, and, in times of private or public calamity, trust in God. Filled with that sense of repletion which is time's final gift to the old, he believes in the possible virtue of man, a quality of manliness that is both physical and spiritual.

To Hook this quality of virtue redeems the human animal's capacity for folly and evil because it brings man close to the idea of God. But in Conner's brave new world there is no more place for God than there is for error. Fanatical in his belief in progress, order, hygiene, and the elimination of superstition and pain, he possesses the inhuman energy of a machine. The truth is that he does not think of the inmates under him as people; they are his charges, and it is his job to confer on them the good they often cannot understand and sometimes do not want. In his view all life should be regulated and institutionalized, as passionless as the antics of tomorrow's adolescents, who satisfy their emotional needs by undressing and then staring in curiosity but without desire at one another's nude bodies. Conner is a citizen of a planned society, and the institution is his spiritual home.

The tensions of the day finally break when the inmates turn on Conner and stone him with the rubble from the damaged wall. Then the skies clear and the fair is held after all, but under circumstances which have allowed the old people to save some remnants of their pride and self-respect. Asking only the bread of understanding, they have been offered the cold stone of charity, and they have rejected it along with a world they never made. John Updike's home for the aged and the poor becomes an image of some future world of social planning and the regimentation it implies. Even so, the futile anarchy of the old, like Hook's compassion for man's frailty and respect for

human dignity, suggests a more meaningful existence than that offered by the outside world whose citizens come to the fair to have refreshed their dimming memories of an older, more individualistic, less "planned" and regimented America.

If this brief outline makes *The Poorhouse Fair* sound like a social polemic or a sentimentalized fantasy, nothing could be farther from the truth. The novel is a story of real people; its tensions are those created by man's moral urgencies and spiritual needs. It is only on a secondary plane that it takes on historical and social implications as a picture of a country and an age caught uneasily between the values of the past and fears for the future. It is a serious work, but not a solemn one, for Updike is a novelist of wry humor which gives to his novel a coloring of astringent, unillusioned comedy that is perfectly in keeping with his picture of the stubborn, life-grasping qualities of the old in conflict with the dehumanized humanitarianism of their prefect.

Where so much is unpretentiously eloquent and everything is clear, it is carping criticism, perhaps, to say that John Updike writes with too tight a rein. There is considerable intensity here, but he seems determined to hold it in check. What is needed is a less muted tone of voice to give greater effect to the emotional impact of his material. For the rest, *The Poorhouse Fair* is a novel of art in the true sense of that abused term. Among other things, this writer is the master of a wonderfully poetic style, and his descriptions are evocative and sensuous, filled with imaginative details yet always rooted firmly in the immediacy of things seen and heard. These qualities give to his prose the density and precision of poetry in a first novel in which the human need for understanding and to be one's self clash meaningfully with the impersonal authority of benevolent statism.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG DOG

Type of work: Short stories

Author: Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

First published: 1940

Recent biographical studies of Dylan Thomas record a change in our appreciation of him only to be expected now that his death makes reassessment possible. We would have made the change earlier if his prose had been justly recognized as it is now beginning to be in anthologies. But during his lifetime Dylan Thomas was regarded in this country as a great English poet and reciter. Beginning now to see his work as a many-faceted whole, including poetry, fiction, dramas, essays, and impressionistic sketches, we recognize the prime importance of his first collection of short stories, which is also a mock-autobiography, mockingly titled in imitation of James Joyce.

If his critics are right in concluding that most of Thomas' best poetry was written in Swansea before he left Wales for London at the age of twenty, it may also be suggested that this collection of short stories set in Swansea and environs laid the foundations for much of the work that was to follow. "One Warm Saturday," the final story in the collection, seems to anticipate the events of Thomas' next book of prose, the unfinished novel, *Adventures in the Skin Trade*, and to use the same surrealistic style. In both the story and the novel the ever-pursued eludes capture by the hero as reality dissolves around him, which may well be the theme of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*.

But the relationship of these stories to the Thomas canon is not so straightforward. *Adventures in the Skin Trade* is his first prose work; Thomas called it his "Welsh book." It was commissioned by a London publisher and the first chapter appeared in the periodical *Wales* in 1937. The previous year Richard Church had suggested that Thomas write some autobiographical prose tales, and after his

marriage in July, 1937, he set to work in a very different style and produced "A Visit to Grandpa's," in which the surrealism is muted and the lyrical tone sustained by the young narrator; this story, standing second in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, became Thomas' favorite broadcast and reading material. The most interesting feature of the new style of story is the rapid succession of apparently logical but often haphazardly related events, the whole ending in a diminuendo that seems anticlimactic.

The intention of the play of event on the diminutive observer is to record, by means of an episode that largely concerns or happens to others, a stage in the observer's growth, in his development as a "young dog."

The development of the "Dylan Thomas" of the *Portrait* stories into the "young dog" of the final tales is related to the development of the real Thomas as a writer, principally in the latter's use of autobiographical material for prose, poetry, and drama. Thomas delivered the typescript of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* to his publisher, in lieu of the "Welsh book" in December, 1939. Nine days later, talking to Richard Hughes, he remarked that the people of Laugharne, where he was then living, needed a play of their own. This remark is usually recognized as the origin of *Under Milk Wood*. Some years earlier Thomas had toyed with the notion of another imitation of Joyce, a sort of Welsh *Ulysses* that would cover twenty-four hours in the life of a Welsh village. Thus, from the notions of imitating Joyce and the suggestions of Church and Hughes, together with his development of a distinct prose style (instead of a prose extension of his verse, as in *Adventures in the Skin Trade*) came his best-known

prose and drama. The autobiographical base is common to both works and to his poetry.

In real life Fern Hill and Ann Jones provided Gorsehill and Auntie Ann of the first story, "The Peaches," and also the poems "Fern Hill" and "Ann Jones." The fourth story, "The Fight," is a version of Thomas' first meeting with Daniel Jones, the Welsh composer, when they were boys in Swansea. Likewise, Trevor Hughes, his first genuine admirer, became the central character of the eighth story, "Who Do You Wish Was with Us?" and some of Thomas' experiences on the *South Wales Daily Post* are recorded in four of the stories, especially the last two.

The book, although composed of short stories, is given a sense of direction by careful ordering of the sequence and by repeated and cumulative details inside the stories. The ten stories fall into three periods of life: childhood, boyhood, and young manhood. The central character is called "Dylan Thomas," and although this fact is not stressed in each story it is obliquely indicated in most. Other characters reappear in some of the tales, such as his cousin Gwilym Jones and his older colleagues in journalism. But the chief cohesive factor in the collection is not the central character so much as the fact that each story celebrates a visit or an excursion either within the provincial town or just beyond it. Thus the town and its environs become a character in the book, elaborated in the names of its houses, its shops and pubs, and its weather from the warmth of summer evenings on the beach to its wet wintry nights. The locales of the stories, like the seasons of the year, change from story to story and help create the image of the region as a setting for the gallery of minor characters who dominate each story. The hero remains, as he says in "Just Like Little Dogs," a lonely and late-night observer of the odd doings of the townsfolk. The landmarks of the locale become associated with the stories of chance or temporary acquaint-

ances met on his excursions, and these stories generally say that everyone has a skeleton in the kitchen cupboard, as is certainly true of *Under Milk Wood*.

The skeleton is generally a private vice which is not too vicious and may be both comic and pathetic. From the first three stories, "The Peaches," "A Visit To Grandpa's," and "Patricia, Edith and Arnold," we learn that Dylan's Uncle Jim is drinking his pigs away; Cousin Gwilym has his own makeshift chapel and rehearses there his coming ministry; Grandfather Dan dreams he is driving a team of demon horses and has delusions about being buried; the Thomases' maid, Patricia, is involved with the sweetheart of the maid next door.

In the next pair of stories, "The Fight" and "Extraordinary Little Cough," the pains and pleasures of boyhood begin to affect the hero, chiefly in finding a soul-mate, a fellow artist, and also in coming up against the horror of plain viciousness in his companions. The remainder of the stories deal with young manhood and are varied in subject and treatment, from the recital of a tale told to the narrator to the final story in which the narrator for the first time becomes the protagonist, although an ineffectual one.

Most of the stories include an episode set at night, and it seems a pity that the best of Thomas' night stories, the ghostly "The Followers," could not somehow be included now in the present collection.

The stories are arranged in roughly chronological order, culminating in "One Warm Saturday" and "Old Garbo," which show Dylan Thomas' inner way of escape from his home town as reality disappears in a wash of beer and a montage of what-might-have-been. In real life Thomas took to London and drinking to get out of Swansea; by the time he arrived in London he had already discovered how to blur the concrete outlines of provincial life and make its mores jump as he was to do best in *Under Milk Wood*. There is another possible explanation for his ability to see events under the

conditions of dream, and that is his Welshness; there is a hint of that in the sorry, "Where Tawe Flows," titled after the "Great Welsh Novel" which a character named "Mr. Thomas" and three older friends are writing in weekly installments. "Mr. Thomas" is about to leave for London and a career as a freelance journalist. The novel is supposed to be a study of provincial life but the collaborators are only at the second chapter. We do not hear the contribution of "Mr. Thomas" because he has spent the week writing the story of a dead governess turned into a vampire because a cat jumped over her at the moment of her death. One of the foursome offers, instead, the biography of a character named Mary, an account supposed to be realistic but as fantastic as anything the real Mr. Thomas ever wrote.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog accumulates the tensions of provincial life to the breaking point, as does Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. At the end of both books the hero breaks

from home as the style becomes distinctly broken. The increasingly nonrealistic style at the end of both books, a formal expression of the whirling thoughts of each young man, could be somehow symptomatic of the breaking of ties with Dublin and Swansea. Since it occurs in both books, and elsewhere, it cannot be explained as Joyce's Irishness or Thomas' Welshness; both are provincials heading for what they consider to be a literary center, Paris or London. In both books the break is long prepared for in the tensions built up, but more obviously in Joyce, from a highly imaginative childhood in the case of both author and hero through the pains of adolescence to the frustrations of university study or journalism on a provincial daily. The tensions recorded in both works are so strong that they expel their subjects far from their place of origin. If we want to know why Joyce died in Zurich or Thomas in New York, the answer is in their own autobiographies of provincial life.

THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

Type of work: Novel

Author: James M. Cain (1892-1966)

Time: 1933

Locale: Southern California

First published: 1934

Principal characters:

FRANK CHAMBERS, a young drifter

NICK PAPADAKIS, proprietor of the Twin Oaks Tavern

CORA PAPADAKIS, Nick's young wife

MR. SACKETT, the District Attorney

MR. KATZ, a lawyer

MADGE ALLEN, the keeper of an animal farm

Three related genres that developed in the novel form during the 1930's were the hard-boiled private detective (which departed from the genteel English novel of detection), the proletarian (which derived from European naturalism and American selective realism), and the tough guy (which derived from the former two). But perhaps for the best and

most influential work of all three genres "the tough-guy novel" is a good term: Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, published in 1929, and Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, published in 1939, in the private detective realm; B. Traven's *The Death Ship*, which appeared in an American edition in 1934, among proletarian novels; and Horace McCoy's *They*

Shoot Horses, Don't They? published in 1935, among the pure tough-guy books are all minor classics in American literature. These and similar novels expressed the mood of American society during the depression, influenced action in motion pictures, affected the tone and attitude of more serious writers, and inspired certain European novelists during the 1940's. The quintessence of all these is James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

Although Frank Chambers, the twenty-four-year-old narrator of Cain's novel, belongs to that legion of unemployed who became tramps of the road, hoboes of the rails, and migrant workers, Cain is not deliberately interested in depicting the social ills of his time; if there is an attack on conditions that produced a man like Frank, it is only implicit. Frank is an easy-going fellow, remarkably free of bitterness, even when given cause; although he commits murder and pistol whips a blackmailer, he is not willfully vicious. A spontaneous creature of action whose psychological nature readily accommodates ambivalent attitudes, he can be fond of Nick Papadakis and weep at his funeral, yet seduce his young wife Cora, and attempt to kill him twice.

And although this novel is concerned, as many of Cain's are, with murder and other forms of violence, and although it satisfies momentarily the average American's inexhaustible craving for details of crime and punishment, it cannot be classified as a detective tale. Cain, like the readers he has in mind, is fascinated by the intricacies of the law and of insurance claims, but his primary interest is in presenting an inside view of the criminal act. However, Frank is no gangster and Cora is no moll; they are not far removed in status or aspiration from the average anticipated reader of Cain.

For Frank and Cora lie down in the great American dream of the 1920's, only to wake up in a living nightmare in the 1930's. A lurid decade produced such a lurid relationship and such a lurid tale.

When they meet at Nick's Twin Oaks Tavern on a highway outside Los Angeles, Frank has just been thrown off a truck, having sneaked into the back for a ride up from Tiajuana, and Cora is washing dishes in the restaurant. To demonstrate the animal impact of their encounter, Cain has them meet on page 5, make love on page 15, and decide to murder the obese, middle-aged Greek on page 23. Sharing the dream of getting drunk and making love without hiding, they go on what Cain calls "the Love-Rack." He regards the concept of "the wish that comes true" as a terrifying thing. This terror becomes palpable as soon as Frank and Cora believe that they have gotten away with murder and have acquired money, property, and freedom.

But in the background each has another dream which mocks the shared realization of the immediate wish. Cora came to Hollywood from a small town in Iowa bemused by the dream most girls of the Thirties cherished: to become a movie star. She failed, and Nick rescued her from a hash house. But basically her values are middle-class, and above all she wants respectability, even if murder is the prerequisite. An anachronism in the age of technology, though he has a certain skill as a garage mechanic, Frank desires to be always on the move, compelled by something of the spirit of the open road that Whitman celebrated. For a moment, but only for a moment, he shares this romantic, idyllic vision with Cora. After the failure of their first attempt to murder Nick, they set out together for a life of wandering. Thus, in the criminal affair of these lovers, these deliberate outsiders, two central dreams of the American experience—unrestrained mobility and respectable sedentariness—and two views of the American landscape—the open road and the mortgaged house—collide. As the dreams finally betray them, they begin, ironically, to turn on each other, for basically what Frank wants is Cora, the sexual dynamo, and what Cora wants is an instrument to be used to gain

her ends—money and respectability. Though she may convince herself that the right man, instead of a fat foreigner, is a necessary part of her aspirations, this man would soon wake up in the wrong dream.

While the novel's larger thematic dimensions exist in the background, as a kind of fable of the American experience, giving it a lasting value in our literature, Cain is more immediately concerned with the lovers and with the action that results from their wish. This action keeps in motion certain elements that almost guarantee the reader's interest: illicit love; murder; the smell of tainted money; sexual violence that verges on the abnormal; and the strong characterizations of such men as Sackett, the district attorney; Katz, the eccentric lawyer; and Madge, the pick-up who takes Frank to South America to capture jaguars. Cain plays upon the universal wishes of the average American male.

What fascinates serious readers of literature is Cain's technique for manipulating reader response. Not only does he almost automatically achieve certain thematic ironies inherent in his raw material, but the ironies of action are stunningly executed. For instance, Frank cons Nick out of a free meal, but the con backfires in a way when Nick cons Frank into staying on to operate the service station; thus Frank becomes involved in a situation that will leave three people dead. After recovering from what he took to be an accident in the bathtub, Nick searches for Frank and persuades him to return to the roadside restaurant, thus helping to bring about his own death. Cleared of killing the Greek, Frank and Cora collect the insurance. Later, when she is waiting for a taxi to leave Frank, Cora sticks a note for him in the cash register; it refers to their having killed the Greek for his money. But Frank catches her and insists that he loves her; to test his love, Cora, who is now pregnant, swims so far out to sea that Frank will have to help her back; he does help her, but driving back from

the beach, they have a wreck and she is killed. The police find the note in the cash register and conclude that Frank has engineered the wreck so that he can have all the money. Because he cannot be tried twice for killing the Greek, they execute him for murdering Cora. A careful pattern of minor ironies contributes to the impact of the major ones.

Cain's structural techniques are impressive. The swift execution of the basic situation in the first twenty-three pages has been noted, and each development, each scene, is controlled with the same narrative skill; inherent in each episode is the inevitability of the next. Everything is kept strictly to the essentials; the characters, for instance, exist only for the immediate action; there is almost no exposition as such. Cain is the acknowledged master of pace. Violence and sexual passion are thrust forward at a rate that is itself part of the reader's vicarious experience. Contributing to this sense of pace is the swift rhythm of the dialogue, which also manages to keep certain undercurrents flowing. Frank's character justifies the economy of style, the nerve-end adherence to the spine of the action. Albert Camus modeled the style of *The Stranger* on Cain's novel, and Meursault is cut to the pattern of Frank Chambers. But Cain has written what has been called a pure novel, for his deliberate intentions go no further than the immediate experience, brief as a movie is, as unified in its impression as a poem usually is. Though Frank writes his story on the eve of his execution, Cain does not even suggest the simplest moral: crime does not pay. An intense experience, which a man tells in such a way as to make it, briefly, our experience, it is its own reason for being. Camus' novel, however, operates on this premise only in the first half; in the second, he begins to develop a philosophical point of view that affects man in every phase of life.

For Cain, the postman, whose custom is always to ring twice, rang thrice. This first novel is one of America's all-time

best sellers and has gone through a great many editions; Cain adapted it to the stage; and it was made into a famous motion picture. After thirty years it is still

being read widely, both as popular entertainment and as a work of art of a very peculiar sort, respected, with severe qualifications, by students of literature.

PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

Type of work: Literary Criticism

Author: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

First published: 1765

Samuel Johnson's Preface to his edition of Shakespeare's plays has long been considered a classic document of English literary criticism. In it Johnson sets forth his editorial principles and gives an appreciative analysis of the "excellences" and "defects" of the work of the great Elizabethan dramatist. Many of his points have become fundamental tenets of modern criticism; others give greater insight into Johnson's prejudice than into Shakespeare's genius. The majestic, resonant prose of the preface adds authority to the views of its author.

Characteristically, Johnson makes his Shakespearian criticism the foundation for general statements about man, nature, and literature. He is a true neo-classicist in his concern with the universal rather than with the particular; the highest praise he can bestow upon Shakespeare is to say that his plays are "just representations of general nature." The dramatist has relied upon his knowledge of human nature, rather than on bizarre effects, for his success. "The pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth," Johnson concludes. It is for this reason that Shakespeare has outlived his century and reached the point at which his works can be judged solely on their own merits, without the interference of personal interests and prejudices that make criticism of one's contemporaries difficult.

Johnson feels that the readers of his time can often understand the universality of Shakespeare's vision better than the audiences of Elizabethan England could, for the intervening centuries have freed

the plays of their topicality. The characters in the plays are not limited by time or nationality; they are rather "the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find."

Implicitly criticizing earlier editors of Shakespeare, who had dotted their pages with asterisks marking particularly fine passages, Johnson contends that the greatness of the plays lies primarily in their total effect, in the naturalness of the action, the dialogue, and the characterization. Again and again Johnson stresses the same point: "This, therefore, is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life." His personages are drawn from the world familiar to everyone: "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion."

That Shakespeare wrote "contrary to the rules of criticism" was, for Johnson, no argument. Aside from the fact that Aristotle's rules were not widely known during Shakespeare's time, Johnson notes: "There is always an appeal open from criticism to nature." Life itself justifies the mingling of comedy and tragedy on the stage; together they exhibit "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination."

While Johnson is aware of Shakespeare's skills in both comedy and tragedy, he suggests that his natural forte was the former: "In tragedy he is always strug-

gling after some occasion to be comick; but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature." Johnson later criticizes some of the tragic speeches as bombast, forced, unnatural emotion, and he complains that all too often scenes of pathos are marred by "idle conceits," and those inspiring terror and pity by "sudden frigidity." Yet the critic later confesses that in spite of these flaws each man finds his mind seized more strongly by Shakespeare's tragedies than by those of any other writer.

Johnson praises Shakespeare's language as that of the "common intercourse of life," used among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition or elegance." His comment is particularly interesting in the light of Wordsworth's insistence, in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, written almost fifty years later, that poetry should be written in the "real language of men," not in the artificial diction that seemed to him to have enslaved the poets of the eighteenth century.

One of Johnson's most stringent objections to Shakespeare's work arises from his strong conviction that literature is essentially didactic. He is disturbed by Shakespeare's disregard of "poetic justice." Johnson was convinced that the writer should show the virtuous rewarded and the evil punished, and he finds that Shakespeare, by ignoring this premise, "sacrifices virtue to convenience." The fact that in life evil often triumphs over good is no excuse in Johnson's eyes: "It is always a writer's duty to make the world better."

Shakespeare's careless plotting and his "disregard for distinctions of time and place" are also noted as flaws; "we need not wonder to find Hector quoting Aristotle, when we see the loves of Theseus and Hippolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of fairies." Although Johnson dislikes Shakespeare's bawdiness, he is willing to concede that that fault, at least, might have rested with the indelicacy of the ladies and gentlemen at the

courts of Elizabeth I and James I, rather than with the playwright. These minor "errors" are far less irritating to Johnson than Shakespeare's use of puns: "A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it."

Johnson's contemporaries often condemned Shakespeare for his lack of attention to the Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action, which were assiduously observed by the French classical dramatists and their English imitators. Johnson notes that Shakespeare did observe the unity of action, giving his plays a beginning, a middle, and an end, and developing his plot by cause and effect. Moreover, he sees no harm in Shakespeare's failure in most cases to limit his action to one place and one day. Most strict neo-classical critics maintained that such limitations of time and space were necessary for dramatic credibility. Johnson finds this assertion ridiculous, for every member of the audience knows that all drama is illusion: "He that can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies, may take it in half an hour for the promontory of Actium. Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation." Real dramatic credibility comes from the validity of the emotions presented: "The reflection that strikes the heart is not, that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed."

Anticipating the historical critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Johnson assesses some of the aspects of Elizabethan England that probably influenced Shakespeare. He stresses the fact that the dramatist was in many ways a pioneer, for he had few truly outstanding English works of drama or poetry to build on. Shakespeare's complicated plots can be traced to the popularity of the elaborate pastoral romances read by his audiences and occasionally used as sources for the plays.

Johnson does not emphasize Shakespeare's learning; he notes that he could

have read in translation the classical works he mentions. The playwright's greatest knowledge came not from books, but from life: "Mankind was not then to be studied in the closet; he that would know the world, was under the necessity of gleaning his own remarks, by mingling as he could in its business and amusements.

Concluding his general commentary, Johnson summarizes Shakespeare's gifts to English literature: "The form, the characters, the language, and the shows of the English drama are his. . . . To him we must ascribe the praise, unless Spenser may divide it with him, of having first discovered to how much smoothness and harmony the English language could be softened."

In the remainder of the Preface Johnson delineates his editorial standards, rejecting the temptation to follow the practices of his predecessors, who had emended, essentially rewritten, the plays where they could not understand or did not like what they found in the earliest texts of Shakespeare's works. Johnson fol-

lowed Pope in basing his edition on the original quarto versions of the plays and on the First Folio, and he attempted, he says, to leave them as nearly as possible what he found them. His explanatory notes are to contain not only his own ideas, but also the views of earlier critics. He quotes others more often to refute them than to praise them, believing that "the first care of the builder of a new system, is to demolish the fabricks which are standing."

In a final exhortation to the reader Johnson places his efforts in perspective; notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. The reader who has not yet experienced Shakespeare's genius must first ignore the editor's aids and simply read for "the highest pleasure that the drama can give." Johnson's modesty is in itself a tribute to Shakespeare; his whole task as editor and critic was to make the great plays more accessible to the public, and his criticism still gives valuable insights to the modern lover of Shakespeare.

THE PRINCESS

Type of work: Narrative poem

Author: Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

First published: 1847

Principal characters:

WALTER VIVIAN, the heir to Vivianplace, an English estate

THE POET

LILIA, Walter Vivian's sister

FIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS, friends of Walter and the Poet

THE PRINCE,

THE KING, his father,

CYRIL and

FLORIAN, two friends of the Prince,

PRINCESS IDA, ruler of a women's college

KING GAMA, her father,

ARAC, her brother,

PSYCHE and

BLANCHE, her tutors,

AGLAÏA, the daughter of Psyche, and

MELISSA, the daughter of Blanche, characters in a story told by Walter Vivian and his friends

First published in 1847, *The Princess* underwent numerous major changes in its later editions; in the third edition of 1850, the poet added the six inter-

calary songs in addition to partial revisions of the "Prologue" and "Epilogue." The fourth edition, published in 1851, saw the introduction of the passages relating to the "weird seizures" of the Prince. Reasons for these changes may be Tennyson's almost immediate dissatisfaction with the work and his desire to clarify public misunderstandings of it or his reaction to the rather unfavorable reception of the poem by contemporary critics. Indeed, the poem today is generally regarded as one of Tennyson's ambitious but lesser works, owing chiefly to the mixed style and the shifting tone of the poem, as well as the somewhat transitory nature of his subject, women's rights.

The Princess begins as a light mock-heroic work and ends with a "serious message"; it begins seemingly not seriously concerned with women's rights and ends equivocally with the poet almost avoiding the issue. Tennyson himself sensed this apparent disunity of the poem and writes in the "Conclusion": "I moved as in a strange diagonal,/And maybe neither pleased myself nor them." Tennyson's ambivalence about his subject and his failure to sustain the comic approach constitute a major blemish for some modern critics, but though the narrative itself is disparaged, few critics deny the power, beauty, and simplicity of the intercalary lyrics of this poem. Several of these are judged among the finest of his poems, and for grace and precision and music, only a small number of English lyrics may favorably compare.

In the "Prologue" the poet and five other college companions join their friend, Walter Vivian, on his father's estate where they view the exhibition of the neighboring Institute, of which Walter's father is patron. A book of family history relating the courage of a female ancestor inspires Lilia, Walter's sister, to speak out for women's rights, particularly their education. Walter tells how at college the seven friends told chain-stories to pass away the time; Lilia suggests that they tell such a story now. Walter agrees

and adds that Lilia be the heroine, "Grand, epic, homicidal," and the poet, who will begin the story, be the hero. The seven-part story which follows is narrated by each of the seven friends; between each part the ladies present sing one of the six songs.

The young Prince, whose family suffers from a curse laid down by a sorcerer, finds that the Princess to whom he was once betrothed as a child now rejects him and wishes to "live alone/Among her women." He begs the King, his father, to be allowed to investigate this puzzle, but the King, of a warlike masculine nature, replies that they will settle this dispute by war. Driven by an inner voice, the Prince rides off to the southern kingdom of the Princess, accompanied by his two friends Cyril and Florian. At a town near the palace where the girls had established their women's college the Prince obtains women's clothes for Cyril, Florian, and himself, and together they enter the college disguised, bearing a letter of introduction from Gama, the King and father of the Princess.

In the second narrative the college portress leads the still disguised males to Princess Ida, who greets them as new students and explains the rules to them: they must not for three years correspond with home, leave the boundaries of the college grounds, or converse with men. Ida tells them they must give up "convention" and work now for the freedom of women. She seems surprised that the males praise so highly the Prince, her former suitor. Next they encounter Psyche, Florian's sister, and Ida's favorite tutor. They admire Aglaia, Psyche's daughter, while Psyche lectures them on the history of feminine slavery. Finally Psyche recognizes her brother beneath his disguise, and nearly betrays them until her natural affection overcomes her duty to Ida. Melissa, the daughter of Blanche, who is Ida's other favorite, also learns their identity but refuses to reveal their secret.

In the third section Ida invites the

men to travel with her, but before their departure the Prince has his first seizure, the curse-inflicted malady of his family. Recovering, the Prince as his own mock-ambassador tries to acquaint Ida with his passion for her and with her unnatural attitude toward men; he alludes to her missing "what every woman counts her due, / Love, children, happiness." Ida reiterates her dedication to her ideals, claiming that while children may die, "great deeds" cannot.

In the fourth section a maid sings "Tears, idle tears," but Ida is unmoved by its sentiment of love. The Prince replies with his song, "O Swallow," a love song; Ida, however, spurns his "mere love poem," saying she admires only art addressed to "great ends." At this point Cyril sings a bawdy song which discloses their true identity. The women flee in panic, and Ida in her haste falls into the river. The Prince rescues her but is captured by her retinue and experiences his second seizure.

In the fifth section, the Prince and his companions, released by the Princess out of gratitude, stumble into the camp of the Prince's father. Gama, the Prince, and the King argue how to win Ida's hand; the King favors aggression, but Gama and the Prince suggest peaceful means. Taunted as a coward, the Prince agrees to a tournament where he will face Arac, Ida's brother, who champions women's rights. Again he falls into a trance and is unable to distinguish shadow and substance. Awakening, he finds the tournament ready to begin; fighting Arac, he is wounded and falls into a deep coma.

The sixth part opens with the Prince in a mystic trance. Ida in her triumph sings "Our enemies have fallen," then opens the palace as a hospital for the wounded. Her foolish insistence upon ascetic withdrawal and her unnatural contempt for men is evident; as she gazes

upon the wounded Prince, however, she begs the King to allow her to care for his son. She embraces Psyche, whom she had dismissed as a traitor, and disbands the college despite Blanche's objections.

In the final part the palace has become a hospital with the maidens nursing the sick. Ida is heartsick because of the frustration of her ideals, but she finds "peace" aiding the wounded men. The Prince lies in a delirious state tended by Ida; as she cares for him she begins to love him, casts off her "falsely self," and kisses the Prince. He succumbs to his love for her and falls into a blissful sleep. That night he awakes to find her reading poems to him; these are two of the best lyrics of the poem, "Now sleeps the crimson petal," and "Come down, O Maid." In the latter poem love is described as being of the "valley," not of mountain heights where Ida's idealism had carried her.

Ida admits her lack of humility, her desire to achieve "power" more than "truth," yet she still regrets the collapse of her idealistic plans to help women achieve status. The Prince, respecting her idealism, replies that they will work together for her goal. He says that women are not "undeveloped" men, that they should join with man in love; from this union the man gains "sweetness" and "moral height," the woman "mental breadth," without losing "the childlike in the larger mind." Either sex alone is "half itself," and together in marriage each "fulfills/Defect in each." The Prince attributes to Ida his rebirth into a better life, his losing doubt and "haunting sense of hollow shows."

The narrative closes and the framework returns with the poet's explanation of the feud which arose between the mockers (the men) and the realists (the women). To satisfy both he proposed his "strange diagonal" and perhaps pleased neither.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry James (1843-1916)

Type of plot: Social criticism

Time of plot: Late nineteenth century

Locale: London

First published: 1886

Principal characters:

HYACINTH ROBINSON, an orphan, apprenticed bookbinder, and revolutionary

MISS AMANDA PYNSENT, the dressmaker who brought up Hyacinth

PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA, an Italian princess with "modern" ideas

ANASTASIUS VETCH, a musician and a friend of Miss Pynsent

PAUL MUNIMENT, the chemist who leads Hyacinth into revolutionary work

LADY AURORA LANGRISH, a noblewoman who works for the good of the poor

MILLCENT HENNING, Hyacinth's childhood playmate

Critique:

In the novel *Roderick Hudson*, the beautiful Christina Light allows herself to be married to the powerful Italian family of Prince Casamassima. Some ten years later James depicts the Princess Casamassima, now separated from her husband, determined to reject her empty social life and to work with the proletariat to destroy oppression. James thus examine critically not only the evils of the social and economic systems which demand reform, but also the motives and methods of the people who propose to carry out those reforms. In many novels James studies the interaction of characters from two widely separated continents, but in this work he examines the interaction of characters from two widely separated social classes as the world of princes and dukes encounters the world of bookbinders and chemists. Every character changes as a result of this contact across class lines. Whether these changes in character are for the better or for the worse, James leaves to his readers to decide.

The Story:

Florentine Vivier, a French dressmaker, gave birth to an illegitimate son

and accused an Englishman, Lord Frederick Purvis, of being the boy's father. Because Lord Frederick and his family refused to recognize the baby, Florentine Vivier stabbed Lord Frederick to death, a crime for which she received the maximum prison sentence. Her son, called Hyacinth Robinson, she entrusted to another poor dressmaker, Miss Amanda Pynsent, who brought him up without telling him the unfortunate circumstances surrounding his birth.

Years later Mrs. Bowerbank, a prison matron, visited Miss Pynsent to tell her that Florentine Vivier was dying in the prison hospital and had asked to see her son, now ten years of age. Miss Pynsent consults Mr. Vetch, a violinist in a Bloomsbury theater, who was her closest friend. On his advice she took Hyacinth to the prison. He did not know that the woman was his mother. The grim prison frightened him, and at first his mother spoke only in French, saying that she feared he was ashamed of her. She embraced him pitifully before the matron hustled the visitors away.

Years again passed. In the interval the rowdy family of Millicent Henning, the childhood friend of Hyacinth, had been

ejected from their quarters next to Miss Pynsent's shop in Lomax Place. Mr. Vetch had a copy of Lord Bacon's *Essays* bound as a gift for Hyacinth and thus had met the master bookbinder Eustache Poupin, exiled from France after the Commune of 1871. Mr. Vetch learned that he and Poupin had a common bond of hate for the existing social and political fabric. Poupin secured for Hyacinth an apprenticeship with Crookenden's bookbindery and taught him French and socialism.

Millicent Henning, grown to a bold, handsome young woman, unexpectedly appeared once more in Lomax Place to renew her friendship with Hyacinth. Poupin introduced Paul Muniment to Hyacinth. Paul took him to visit his crippled sister, Rose Muniment, and there they met Lady Aurora Langrish, who devoted her time to caring for the poor and who admired Paul a great deal. She was a spinster much neglected by her large and wealthy family. Paul led Hyacinth more deeply into revolutionary activity. In the meantime Hyacinth had looked up the newspaper reports of his mother's trial, and he considered himself the aggrieved son of Lord Frederick Purvis.

Mr. Vetch got for Hyacinth tickets to take Millicent to see the play, *The Pearl of Paraguay*. Captain Godfrey Sholto, whom Hyacinth had met at a revolutionists' discussion group at "The Sun and Moon" public house, came from his box at the theater to invite Hyacinth to meet his companions, the Princess Casamassima and her old companion, Madame Grandoni.

Prince Casamassima tried to see the princess to beg her to return to living with him, but she refused to see him. As the prince was leaving her house, he saw Hyacinth ushered in, at the princess' invitation, to tea. Later, Hyacinth bound a copy of Tennyson as a gift for the princess, but when he tried to deliver his gift he learned that she had left London for a series of visits in the country. Hyacinth also encountered Captain Sholto

in a bar and, as Sholto hurried him strangely along, they encountered Millicent. Hyacinth suspected that Millicent had arranged to meet Sholto.

Paul Muniment announced at a meeting at "The Sun and Moon" that the revolutionary organizer, Hoffendahl, who had spent twelve years in Prussian prisons, was in London. After Hyacinth declared his readiness to give his life for the cause, Paul took him to see Hoffendahl. There he swore an oath to perform an act of violence whenever Hoffendahl should send the order. Meanwhile, the princess had invited Hyacinth to stay at her country house, Medley. The princess was extremely pleasant and Hyacinth stayed on in the country. One day Captain Sholto rode up to Hyacinth as he was walking on the estate and asked Hyacinth to obtain an invitation to dinner for him. Clearly, Hyacinth had replaced Sholto as the princess' favorite.

He returned from Medley to find Miss Pynsent dying. In her will she left a small sum of money to him. Mr. Vetch added to this sum and advised Hyacinth to travel on the Continent. On his return, he heard that the princess had sold all her beautiful furnishings, moved to a tawdry, lower middle-class house in Madeira Crescent, and become friendly with Paul Muniment, who was now deeply involved in revolutionary activities. In the meantime Hyacinth's own contact with wealth and leisure had made life seem more valuable and the society which produces and appreciates art more tolerable.

The prince followed the princess and observed her going out with Paul Muniment. He demanded that Madame Grandoni tell him what she was doing. As the prince left Madame Grandoni, he met Hyacinth. While they were walking away from the house they saw Paul and the princess return and enter together. Madame Grandoni abandoned the princess. The prince wrote to Paul saying that he would send no more money to his wife.

At Poupin's Hyacinth found the Ger-

man worker Schinkel with sealed orders for him. He was to go to a grand party and there assassinate a duke. Mr. Vetch tried to keep Hyacinth from doing some desperate action. Hyacinth went to the store where Millicent worked, only to

find her talking to Captain Sholto. The princess, going to Hyacinth's room, found Schinkel waiting. She demanded that he break in. Inside, they find that Hyacinth had shot himself in the heart.

PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Type of work: Critical treatise

Author: I. A. Richards (1893-)

First published: 1924

Ivor Armstrong Richards was born in Sandbach, England, on February 26, 1893. He received his formal education at Magdalene College of Cambridge University, where he received the degree of M.A. He became a teaching Fellow of Magdalene in 1926 and has also held positions as visiting professor at Tsing Hua University, Peking, from 1929 to 1930, visiting lecturer at Harvard in 1931, and Director of The Orthological Institute of China from 1936 to 1938. Throughout his life, he has been vitally interested in the Orient. While teaching in China, he studied Chinese philosophy and worked on his book *Mencius on the Mind*. He has had a special interest in the thought of Confucius. In 1964 he was made an Honorary Fellow of Magdalene College.

Although he has written poetry and drama, his major contributions have been in the fields of literary criticism and philosophy. His first book, *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, published in 1922 and written in collaboration with psychologist C. K. Ogden and art authority James Wood, examined the whole area of aesthetics in an attempt to arrive at the nature of beauty and to offer the authors' own definition of aesthetics. In 1923, Richards and Ogden published *The Meaning of Meaning*, a psychologically oriented pursuit of "meaning" in the arts. But more significant critical pronouncements were made in the next three books: *Principles of Literary Criticism* in 1924, *Science and Poetry* in 1926, and *Practical Criticism* in 1929. All three

books treat the question of value in the arts, primarily poetry, and all are concerned with the problem of correct interpretation of art. Their aims are different, however: *Principles of Literary Criticism* spells out the theory; *Science and Poetry* discusses the role and future of literature in life; and *Practical Criticism* applies theory to individual literary works. Richards' last major critical book, *Coleridge on Imagination*, published in 1935, explores several meanings of the concept of imagination and singles out Coleridge's definition as the one most accurate and applicable to twentieth century criticism.

From the early 1930's, as the solution to problems in education and general communication, Richards has been interested in Basic English. In writing *The Meaning of Meaning*, he and Ogden realized that they repeatedly used certain key words which, they discovered, could form a basic language that would permit the expression of any idea. While it was Ogden who published the first Basic word list, Richards has actively pursued his own linguistic research in *Basic in Teaching: East and West*, *Interpretation in Teaching*, *How to Read a Page*, and *Basic English and Its Uses*.

Among his critical books, *Principles of Literary Criticism* most directly concerns the deriving of value from the arts, especially the art of poetry. In many ways the basis of all Richards' pronouncements on criticism, it sets forth his fundamental critical and artistic theories.

He begins this complex study by indi-

cating several difficulties which often preclude valid criticism. First of all, there is too much of what Richards calls "experimental aesthetics" in the arts: futile attempts to make human tastes and actions amenable to laboratory examination. Moreover, criticism tends to concentrate on secondary aspects of the arts and thereby ignores the all-important subject of value. And at other times, the very language of criticism causes misunderstandings because of its vague, often deceiving vocabulary. For example, critics often speak of objects of art as if the objects themselves possess qualities, whereas what they should say is that the objects evoke effects in us.

To offset these impediments, Richards insists that valid criticism is contingent upon an understanding of the nature of experience and the formulating of an acceptable theory of valuation and communication in the arts. The first of these topics, experience, is approached purely psychologically. In fact, much of *Principles of Literary Criticism* is comprised of chapters which give the psychological background to particular facets of aesthetic appreciation and communication. In Chapter XI, "A Sketch for a Psychology," Richards reminds us that the mind is the nervous system and is thus a system of impulses which are influenced by various stimuli. Our response to certain stimuli depends upon the needs of the body at a given moment. The basis of aesthetic experience, then, also lies in the impulses which arise in the mind as a result of various stimuli. These stimuli may be either new and independent or associated with former experiences.

Other aspects of experience are discussed throughout the book; for example, the role of memory, of emotion and coenesthesia, and of attitudes. The fine line between the "pleasure-unpleasure" of a sensation is also considered. An important adjunct to the discussion of experience is treated in Chapter XXII, "The Poet's Experience." The difference between the artist and the ordinary man, points out

Richards, is first of all in the "range, delicacy, and freedom" of the relationships he can make among facets of his experience. Secondly, it is in the "availability" of the artist's experience: the ability to have a particular state of mind available when needed. Moreover, the artist has a higher degree of what Richards terms vigilance: a more complete, satisfactory organization of the impulses within him. Thus, though we all have experiences and, except for the insane, can organize them to some extent, the poet is more capable of making use of his experience.

After attempting to suggest succinctly the causation, nature, and effect of experience, Richards moves on to the two topics with which he is most concerned, valuation and communication. The arts, he says, are our "storehouses" of recorded values. He admonishes the critic to be concerned with value and morality. His definition of value is explained in Chapter VII, "A Psychological Theory of Value," in which he asserts that anything is valuable that satisfies a desire within us without thwarting an equal or more important desire. Additional value is achieved when any desire is sacrificed to another. Value, then, is defined as the exercise of impulses and the fulfilling of their desires.

Though all men are concerned with values, he who is most concerned is the artist. He is the one preoccupied with recording and perpetuating the experiences he deems most valuable; he is also the one most likely to have valuable experiences to record; finally, he is the one most able to organize or systematize the significant and trivial impulses which are a part of experience. The poet, moreover, lays the basis of morality, for the problem of morality is the problem of obtaining the most value from life. Thus, Richards is opposed to the "Art for Art's sake" theory of poetry, a theory which denies external values in art. He urges the similarity between the world of poetry and the real world and fears that any separation of poetic experience from life results in

imbalance, narrowness, and incompleteness in advocates of the aesthetic theory. Value can even determine whether a poem is good or bad. In Chapter XXV, "Badness in Poetry," Richards asserts that art can fail if (1) communication is defective or (2) if the experience communicated is not valuable.

For value in the arts to be perceived by the spectator there must, of course, be effective communication. In Chapter IV, "Communication and the Artist," Richards states that not only are the arts communicative, but they are the "supreme form" of communication, even though the artist may not have communication as his primary goal; he is usually concerned foremost with making the work correct.

By communication, Richards means that under certain conditions individual minds are able to are quite similar experiences. Never is there an actual transference of or participation in the shared experiences, however. Communication, a complicated process, occurs when one mind acting upon its environment influences another mind, and that other mind undergoes an experience that is similar to the experience in the first mind.

If the arts are the supreme form of communication, the artist is faced with the challenge of transmitting his experiences to the reader effectively. To do he must maintain a state of normality. For no matter how available his past experience is, the artist must be normal enough to communicate it. Since communication requires responses which are uniform and are initiated by stimuli which can be handled physically, any eccentricity in the artist will be disastrous if it interferes with his responses. His expression in the arts means nothing to his spectators if he is unable to organize his responses.

After probing the nature of experience, the essence of value, and the importance of communication in the arts, Richards turns his attention more specifically to the practicing critic of poetry. The good critic must meet three qualifications: he must be able to experience

without eccentricity the state of mind of the work he is criticizing; he must be able to differentiate between experiences by discerning their more subtle features; and he must be adept at judging values. But given these capabilities, the critic is still unable to pass sound judgments on poetry if he is unsure of exactly what poetry is. One of the reasons for so much backward criticism, Richards believes, is that the critic simply does not know what he is judging. He needs a workable definition of poetry, and Richards offers one by defining poetry as a group of experiences which differ only very slightly from a standard experience. Such a definition, he says, is far more meaningful than calling poetry the artist's experience, for the latter implies that only the artist has the experience. In Richards' view the reader's involvement is necessary for completion of the poetic experience.

These four topics,—experience, value, communication, and poetry and the critic—are the major concerns of *Principles of Literary Criticism*. Many other related topics are discussed. Among the most significant for poetry and literary criticism are his treatments of analyzing a poem (XVI), of rhythm and meter in verse (XVII), of allusiveness in modern poetry (XXVIII), and of the creative imagination (XXXII). The book closes with a brief essay on "The Poetry of T. S. Eliot," an appendix which was added to the second edition of the book in 1926.

In his discussion of the imagination, Richards shows his allegiance to Coleridgean theory. He accepts the concept of the imagination as being the synthesizing or balancing of dissimilar qualities. This concept, he concludes, is the heart of poetry and the other arts.

It would be futile to attempt to estimate the influence that *Principles* has had on the field of criticism. Let it suffice to say that the book is credited with beginning the whole era of modern criticism. Practically every modern critic, from a traditionalist like Lionel Trilling to a new critic such as Cleanth Brooks,

has been influenced by this work because of its penetrating study of experience,

value, and communication and its clarification of the definition of poetry.

PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

Type of work: Economic treatise

Author: John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

First published: 1848

John Stuart Mills' central concern in *Principles of Political Economy* is the production and distribution of wealth, which he defines as everything that serves human desires and which is not provided gratuitously by nature. The most important elements in wealth are goods currently produced

Production requires labor and appropriate natural objects. The labor devoted to a product is rewarded out of its sale proceeds, but before these are realized, advances to workers are required, which come from capital. "Productive" labor is that which yields an increase in material wealth.

Capital consists of wealth used for productive activity. Capital provides the tools and materials needed to carry on production, as well as subsistence for the laborers while the production process is going on. The quantity of a nation's industry is limited by its stock of capital. Increased capital means increased ability to hire workers, and thus increased output and employment. The accumulation of capital results from saving. It is not from demand for commodities, but from capital, that demand for labor arises, although the demand for commodities determines in what productive activities workers can find employment.

Differences in the productivity of nations may arise from geographic factors such as climate and fertility of soil. There are also important differences in labor quality—in physical vigor, in ability to persevere in pursuit of distant objectives, in skill, knowledge, and trustworthiness. Productivity is enhanced by legal and social institutions favoring security of person and property, and by effective cooperation as manifested in division of

labor. Because of greater specialization of men and equipment, large-scale productive establishments are often more efficient than small ones.

The rate at which production grows depends on the rate of growth of labor, capital, and land, and on improvements in productive technique. Increases in population tend to raise the total quantity of production by increasing the labor supply but may, by increasing the number of consumers, keep down the living standards of the working class. Unless birth rates are limited, increases in population and labor supply must continually tend to force wages to low levels.

The rate at which capital increases reflects the flow of saving, which depends on the level of income and the desire to accumulate rather than to consume. Willingness to save is encouraged when the expected profits of investment are high and when uncertainty and insecurity are at a minimum. Whether a society is progressive or backward depends in large degree on the level of saving it achieves.

The real limits to production growth arise from the limited quantity and limited productiveness of land. Cultivation of land is subject to diminishing returns—that is, increased application of labor and capital by any given proportion will increase total output only in some lesser proportion. Fortunately, tendencies toward diminishing return can be counteracted by improvements in methods of production, but these are more likely to produce decreasing costs in industry than in agriculture. The pressure of population growth against diminishing returns is the principal cause of widespread poverty.

While the laws of production are es-

entially physical, the principles of distribution are social; once the goods are produced, they can be distributed as men wish. An important determinant of income distribution is the nature and distribution of private property. Critics currently find much fault with the institution of private property and propose socialist systems involving democratic management of productive operations and equal division of the product. Such schemes cannot be dismissed as impracticable. Admittedly some people might shirk their responsibilities to work, but this is also a serious defect of existing property and wage arrangements. A communitarian society would have to guard against an excessive birth rate and might encounter problems in determining who should perform which tasks. As an ideal, the communist society is far more attractive than the unjust pattern of the present, but the reason is that practices relating to private property have not conformed to the ideal of assuring to each person the fruits of his labor or abstinence. The best system will be that which is consistent with the greatest amount of human liberty and spontaneity.

The produce of society is divided among the three classes who provide productive agents: labor, capital, and land. Wages are determined by the proportion between population (supply) and capital (demand); thus high birth rates tend to inhibit increases in wage rates. Limitation of births by the working class would be promoted by the extension of education and by any sudden, rapid improvement in their condition.

The profits of the capitalist are the reward for abstinence, for risk-taking, and for the effort of superintendence. Profits arise from the fact that labor produces more than is required for its subsistence; workers depend on the relationship between the productivity of labor and the wage rate.

The rent of land is determined by the demand for it (and its produce), the supply of land being fixed. Differences in rent reflect differences in productivity on

lands of different quality. Growth of population and capital tends to increase rents, as demand for food increases.

As economic systems expand through growth of labor and capital, the rate of profit tends to decline because higher food prices force up wage costs. The declining rate of profit may in turn halt the increase of capital and produce a stationary state. This state of affairs would not necessarily be bad, provided no one were poor, and provided the unseemly struggle for wealth and power were replaced by more elevated pursuits. Social improvement would also result from improvement of the relationship between employer and worker, perhaps through profit-sharing or through co-operatives of producers or consumers.

The value of any article means the amounts of other things for which it will exchange in the market. To possess value, an article must possess utility (be desired), and be subject to some difficulty of attainment. Value tends to that level at which the quantity which buyers will take (demand) is equal to the quantity which sellers will offer (supply). Since cost of production is a chief determinant of supply, value tends to equal cost (plus a normal profit for capital), unless monopoly conditions prevail. Although labor is the chief element of cost, capital must also be rewarded or it will not be forthcoming. The longer the waiting between the application of labor and the emergence of the finished product, the greater the capital cost.

Money provides a common measure of value and facilitates specialization and exchange. Variations in the general price level tend to be proportional to changes in the quantity of money, or in its rapidity of circulation, assuming the quantity of goods remains unchanged. Since credit may serve as a substitute for (metal) money, it can also influence the level of prices. Expansion or contraction of credit, in such forms as promissory notes or bank deposits, are principal elements accounting for periodic commercial crises. A paper currency not convertible into pre-

cious metal is liable to depreciate through excessive issue.

Although the supply of any individual commodity may exceed the demand for it, it is not possible for the supply of all commodities to be excessive. Each person's willingness to work and produce reflects his desire to acquire goods for consumption or investment.

In international exchanges, value depends not on the absolute levels of labor and capital required to produce an item, but on the comparative costs. A country may be able to import cloth more cheaply than to produce it, by paying for it with exports of another product in which its labor and capital are highly efficient, even though it could produce cloth with less labor and capital than the country from which it imports. Both participants in such trade tend to benefit from it, and total world output may be increased by the more efficient use of resources through specialization.

Should a country's imports be excessive in relation to its exports, it will tend to export gold and silver to pay the difference. The outflow of money will tend to reduce the price level in that country (and raise it elsewhere), until the trade imbalance is rectified.

The proper functions of government extend, at the very least, to defining and determining the rights of property and contract, the rules of partnerships and corporations, the regulation of insolvency, the monetary system, weights and measures. In addition, government activity may be necessary where the consumer

cannot judge or achieve his own interest (e.g., children's education), or in cases where each person's desire can be effectuated only if all conform (e.g. limiting work hours). It may undertake activities beneficial to the public from which no private person could realize a profit (e.g., lighthouses, scientific research). And since charity will be offered by private persons in any case, it may be better to have it provided by the government so as to minimize possible harmful effects. However, it is necessary to avoid government activities based on fallacious doctrines—policies of tariff protection, price-fixing, restricting entry into a business or occupation, prohibiting trade-union activity.

Limitation of government activity is desirable to avoid undue enhancement of central power or the use of coercive authority in ways which infringe on important individual freedoms. Enlargement of government may also impair the efficiency of its operations.

Taxation should be imposed so as to exact equal sacrifice from each person. This result could be achieved by an income tax taking a fixed proportion of income beyond a minimum exemption. Taxation of inheritance and of unearned increases in land rent is highly desirable, but current saving should be excluded in calculating taxable income.

All things considered, there is a presumption in favor of *laissez faire*; that is, the burden of proof is on those who favor extension of the role of government.

THE PROPHET

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Kahlil Gibran (Gibran Khalil Gibran, 1883-1931)

Time: Ielool, the month of reaping

Locale: The city of Orphalese

First published: 1923

Principal characters:

ALMUSTAFA, a mystic and prophet

ALMITRA, a seeress

Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* belongs to that group of unique publishing events which includes Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* and certain of the works of William Blake, to whom Gibran was compared by the sculptor Rodin. There is, for example, an indefinable quality about FitzGerald's translation which causes even the insensitive to pause and ponder, and its admirers have become a cult. It is a work that appeals especially to the impressionable young adult, and a generation ago the poem was sometimes bound in leather in a miniature edition and used as a prom favor at college dances. Similarly, *The Prophet* owes much to the young of a generation ago, who found in Gibran's poetry a quality that approached the elusive flame center of the word "sincerity." Word of mouth recommendations rather than the publisher's promotions have pushed hardcover sales of this thin volume to more than two million copies—a truly remarkable sales record for a book of poetry.

In order to understand the power of Gibran's poetry it is necessary to know something of his life, of the agonies of remorse that burned within him, of the loneliness of spirit that heightened his senses and enabled him to see the travail of all mankind. The ingredients of his message surpass the mere arrangement of words, even "the best words in the best order," for Gibran seemed to say that all men spring from the dust of the cosmos, that the universe is in us and we are of it. In this idea lies the essence of his appeal to the mystic and especially to the youthful mystic.

Christened Gibran Khalil Gibran, the poet was born in Bechari (Bcherri), Lebanon, the son of a poor shepherd family. When he was twelve, his mother took the family to Boston, hoping, like many immigrants of the day, to gain wealth quickly and then return to the homeland, where the easy-going father had remained to care for the family's small holdings. Soon the opportunities in the new world were apparent and the mother

decided that the sensitive Kahlil must be educated so that he could become a great man. The older son and the two daughters joined the mother at unskilled labor in order to earn the money with which Kahlil might gain an education. But within a few years the family had been decimated by tuberculosis and only Kahlil and his sister Mariana remained. Kahlil never completely recovered from his grief and his sense of guilt over the fact that his family must have died for him.

Bolstered by the loyalty and industry of Mariana, Kahlil began to write and draw, illustrating his own writings in the manner of William Blake. Financial success was elusive, but Gibran gained a patron who prevailed upon him to go abroad for study. He spent two years in Paris, then returned to the United States and soon set up a studio in Greenwich Village, where he worked for the remainder of his life. He began to publish in 1918 with *The Madman*, and in 1923 appeared his masterpiece, *The Prophet*, which has been translated into more than a dozen languages.

The illustrations which accompanied most of the poetry Gibran produced were often as striking as his words, and his works now hang in some of America's finest art museums. Always frail, he was driven beyond endurance by an inner force which would not let him rest, and death overtook him in 1931 in the full flower of his productivity. His body was returned to Lebanon and buried with great honors in the village of his birth.

The Prophet consists of twenty-six poetic essays on various aspects of life, preceded by an introduction and followed by a Farewell, wherein the Prophet promises to return to his people, borne by another woman after a momentary rest upon the wind. Thus, the continuity of life is implied, the circle of birth and death and rebirth.

The introduction, called "The Coming of the Ship," tells how the Prophet is now about to board the ship that has arrived to take him back to his native land

after twelve years among the people of the city of Orphalese. During these twelve years the people of the city have come to love and revere the Prophet for his wisdom and gentle spirit, and they gather in the great square before the temple and beseech him not to leave but to remain forever in their midst. As the multitude weeps and pleads, Almitra, the seeress who had first befriended the Prophet on his arrival in the city, comes out of the sanctuary and asks him to speak to them of life before he departs.

She asks first that he speak of Love, whereupon the Prophet admonishes the hushed audience to follow love when he beckons even though he may wound as he caresses, even though he may destroy dreams as he entices. For love demands complete commitment, a testing in the sacred fires, if one is to see into his own heart and have knowledge of Life's heart. The cowardly should cover themselves and flee from love, for those who can never be possessed by love can never know fulfillment.

The Prophet is then asked in turn to speak of Marriage, Children, Giving, Eating and Drinking, Work, Joy and Sorrow, Houses, Clothes, Buying and Selling, and, by a judge of the city, to talk of Crime and Punishment. In response to the latter request the Prophet speaks at length, pointing out that whereas the most righteous cannot rise above the highest which is in each of us, so the weak and wicked cannot fall below the lowest in each of us; therefore, we must condemn lightly, for we, the whole,

are not entirely blameless for the evil done by one of our parts.

Then a lawyer in the crowd asks for comment on Laws, an orator on Freedom, and a priestess on Reason and Passion, whereupon the Prophet compares reason to a ship's rudder and passion to its sails. Without both, the ship is useless. Without the rudder it will toss aimlessly; without the sails it will lie becalmed like a wingless bird.

The Prophet then speaks of Pain, Self-Knowledge—wherein he likens the self to a limitless, an immeasurable, sea—Teaching, Friendship, Talking, Time, Good and Evil, Prayer, Pleasure, Beauty—which he finds too elusive for definition—Religion, and Death. Of the last he urges mature acceptance, for, like the brook and the lake, life and death are one.

By the time the Prophet has finished speaking twilight had fallen, and he goes straightway to his ship, there to bid a final farewell to his followers. As the ship lifts anchor the sorrowful crowd disperses until only Almitra remains upon the sea wall, watching his ship recede into the dusk and remembering his promise to return in another way at another time.

The Prophet is a work to be experienced, not described. Gibran's insistent subjectivity, shrouded in a religious-like mysticism, swirls the reader inexorably inward toward the center of a vortex where evil has been flung aside and the soul of man stands revealed in all its nobility and goodness.

QUEEN VICTORIA

Type of work: Biography

Author: Lytton Strachey (1880-1932)

Time: 1819-1901

Locale: England and Germany

First published: 1921

Principal personages:

GEORGE IV, King of England, whose death brought Victoria to the throne

THE DUKE OF KENT, Victoria's father
 THE PRINCESS OF SAXE-COBURG, Victoria's mother
 ALEXANDRINA VICTORIA, Queen Victoria of England
 FRÄULEIN LEHZEN, Victoria's influential governess
 BARON STOCKMAR, King Leopold's physician and adviser, later Victoria's and Prince Albert's
 KING LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM, Victoria's uncle
 PRINCE ALBERT OF SAXE-COBURG, Victoria's cousin and influential, beloved husband
 VICTORIA, THE PRINCESS ROYAL,
 EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES,
 PRINCESS ALICE,
 PRINCE ALFRED,
 PRINCESS HELENA,
 PRINCESS LOUISE,
 PRINCE ARTHUR,
 PRINCE LEOPOLD, and
 PRINCESS BEATRICE, the nine royal children
 LORD MELBOURNE,
 WILLIAM LAMB,
 SIR ROBERT PEEL,
 LORD PALMERSTON,
 HENRY JOHN TEMPLE,
 BENJAMIN DISRAELI, and
 WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, influential Prime Ministers

Objecting to the standard "life" of the nineteenth century biographer, Lytton Strachey founded a significant new school of biography. He transformed the ideal biography from a long, redundant eulogy to a concise, clear, and factual account of the subject's life. With the publication of *Queen Victoria* he graphically illustrated that biography could be an art without following the "classical models" of Boswell's *Johnson* or Lockhart's *Scott*. The small biography is restrained; the author is detached; the tone is ironic; and the style is polished. *Queen Victoria* presents a woman as well as a queen, a woman who comes alive as we share Strachey's impressions of her long life.

Strachey opens the biography with an inevitably complicated résumé of the future queen's disreputable—indeed scandalous—uncles, especially of the notorious Prince Regent, who became George IV, and the Duke of Clarence, later King William IV. Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent, the fourth son of George III, married only when he thought that he and his children might succeed to the

English throne. Victoria's mother, the Princess of Saxe-Coburg, discovered after her marriage that her husband was impoverished, but she also knew that if she could bear a child before her sisters-in-law, that child would be ruler of England. On May 24, 1819, she gave birth, but the child was a girl, later to be christened Alexandrina Victoria against her father's wishes. This birth was practically ignored; the English were waiting for the birth of a boy.

The child, reared in obscurity at Kensington, was placed under the governance of Fräulein Lehzen, daughter of a Hanoverian clergyman and the only person who could control the little "Drina's" outbursts of temper. Under the influence of this governess the future queen was taught to be horrified at the shameless behavior of her uncles, and always to be mindful of the virtues of simplicity, regularity, propriety, and devotion. Victoria never forgot her lessons. The Duchess of Kent had decided that her daughter would become a "Christian queen," regardless of the child's happiness. When

Victoria was eleven, her mother invited the Bishops of London and Lincoln and the Archbishop of Canterbury to examine her; she passed, displaying a great variety of Christian knowledge. Still she was not told that she was, in fact, to be Queen of England. When she finally learned of the responsibility eventually to be thrust upon her, she calmly accepted her duty.

But before the day when she would actually become Queen of England, two things happened to the young girl: she met and fell madly in love with her cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg, and she discovered that her mother was having an affair with Sir John Conroy. When Victoria became queen, she entirely separated herself from her mother and momentarily forgot the "beautiful" German prince. She fell under the rigid influence of Fräulein Lehzen and of the Prime Minister, William Lamb, Viscount Melbourne, and she thought that she was happy. She thought that she was free to do as she pleased without her mother's prying eyes, but the eyes and advice of Lehzen and Melbourne were as prying and confining as her mother had been. For example, Victoria was led by her advisers to believe the groundless rumors against Lady Flora Hastings and, as a result, lost the support of the English public. Also she interfered with the government more than many of her subjects thought she should, and thereby she turned the English against her.

In 1840 she married Prince Albert, with whom she was still madly in love. Albert, however, had a will of his own and was not in love with his doting bride. Although he was his wife's intellectual superior and interested in the arts, she let him entertain no scholars or literary men. He had a much better mind for politics, but she was so influenced by Fräulein Lehzen that she would not discuss politics with him. In short, Prince Albert was a miserably unhappy young man who felt that fate had tricked him into an unpleasant marriage. But the prince was advised by clever Baron Stockmar, one of

the best political advisers in Europe, and Stockmar taught him the way to make his will known. Victoria worshipped her husband, and he used her feelings for his own ends. Very slowly Fräulein Lehzen was pushed into the background and shrewd Prince Albert became the leading power behind the throne. In fact, he finally exerted so much influence over Victoria that he was King of England in everything but name. He was still bored, without sympathy for the English whom he considered either too frivolous or too gloomy and unhappy.

Despite Prince Albert's unhappiness, Queen Victoria was happy. Her family was growing; she thought that she was married to the wisest and most perfect man in the world, to the extent that she despised her subjects when they did not agree; and she was untroubled by political intrigue. Prince Albert discovered a way to forget his misery; he lost himself in his work. First, he reformed the organization of the royal household, overcoming abuses and saving much money. Second, he became Victoria's private secretary, had a full voice in politics, and was respected for his well-conceived opinions on political matters. Third, he organized the Great Exhibition of 1851, symbol of English ingenuity and of the full bloom of the Victorian Age. The Great Exhibition took two years to complete and cost so much that popularity turned against Albert. But when it closed, over six million people had visited it and England had been recognized as the first industrial power in Europe.

But the Great Exhibition was followed by trouble from one man, especially hated by the royal couple: Lord Palmerston. Palmerston was ambitious, crude, and impatient; he played the game of international politics cynically, much to Prince Albert's horror, and aided revolutionists, republican movements, and the overthrows of the monarchies throughout Europe, much to Victoria's horror. In fact, he seemed to be a fanatic who did not realize the consequences of his behav-

ior. The dispute between the royal couple and the ambitious politician involved England in one of the most senseless wars of her history, the Crimean War between Russia and Turkey. The issues of this war were not clear; the end of the war was mysterious. But Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister as a result of it.

Despite the political intrigue, Victoria was happy in her three-fold role of queen, wife, and mother, and she had become a symbol of the ideal, especially in the last two roles. Her nine children, her farms, and her dairies needed to be looked after with the same care that she employed in the affairs of her country. The Prince of Wales was a special problem for her because he refused to adhere to the "obligations" laid down by his mother and father. Her children began to marry into the royal houses of Europe, and she passed many days with her consort in almost idyllic happiness. But such happiness was not to last. In 1861 Prince Albert became sick and died, partly because Victoria had refused to believe the seriousness of his condition and call better doctors to his bedside.

This was the turning point of her life. From Prince Albert's death until her own, she was a mysterious figure to the English, a woman clothed in black and separated from the ordinary affairs of life. She felt her loss more deeply than most because she had become so dependent on her consort for advice; in fact, she felt that with his death England had lost a sovereign. Consequently, she was determined to spend the rest of her life convincing the English people that Albert had really been what she believed he was. She supervised the publication of massive biographies, intrigued to have statues of him erected in major cities, and finally planned and executed a magnificent memorial, Albert Hall. Still she was not cheerful. Her popularity had decreased so much that people openly ques-

tioned whether a royal family was worth the money and greatly curtailed the royal allowance. Victoria felt that she was surrounded by hostility, by people who refused to sympathize with her grief, and she came to hate her subjects more and more. But all was not so gloomy. Disraeli, now Prime Minister, won her respect and full support and lightened her unhappiness by such little things as calling her "Faery"—an allusion to Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene*—and giving her the title "Empress of India." She responded with such delightful trivia as gifts of primroses and a peerage. Also, Gladstone's adoration of her as a figure mysteriously and augustly set above and apart from others caused the public to begin to view her with increasing awe; few of her subjects could remember any other monarch. This adoration did two things: it strengthened the position of the crown but weakened the political power of the monarch. Also the seven frustrated attempts to assassinate her ennobled her in her subjects' eyes.

Toward the end of her long life, Victoria had become an institution and a symbol. Her manners and morals were impeccable: for example, she never allowed a divorced woman to enter court and she frowned on second marriages. She even kept Prince Albert's room as a shrine. Her strong sense of duty was an institution shared by her public. Also she was the symbol of the age that bears her name, especially of the imperialism that she so stanchly supported. When she died on January 22, 1901, an age died with her.

Lytton Strachey has not been always fair with the facts, but he has created his impressions in such a clear-cut and fascinating manner that he sweeps the reader into the life of Victoria, revealed as a woman, a great but intellectually limited queen, and a loving wife.

RABBIT, RUN

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Updike (1932-)

Time: 1959

Locale: Mount Judge, Pennsylvania

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

HARRY ANGSTROM, nicknamed "Rabbit," a former basketball star, now, at twenty-six, a salesman
JANICE ANGSTROM, his wife
NELSON, their son
EARL ANGSTROM and
MARY ANGSTROM, Rabbit's father and mother
FRED SPRINGER, Janice's father
MRS. SPRINGER, his wife, called Mom-Mom by her grandson
JACK ECCLES, a young Episcopal minister
LUCY ECCLES, his wife
RUTH LEONARD, with whom Rabbit lives
MARTY TOTHERO, Rabbit's former basketball coach
MRS. HORACE SMITH, a wealthy widow for whom Rabbit works as a gardener

The quality distinguishing John Updike's fiction and putting him in the front rank of novelists at an unusually young age is his ability to "get into" his characters, to experience their palpable worlds as they experience them, and to convey these experiences in prose that is at once rich and translucent. He is in that stream of post-realism that conceives life as it is broadly and inclusively, that finds in the ordinary enough of the extraordinary to excite the poetic imagination without forsaking thorough grounding in quotidian reality. Beyond this, faint but perceptible, is a tough intellectual and religious concern for values, appearing in his fiction not so much as the assertion of one given value system or the other but rather as a constant probing of conflicts of evaluation as these arise in tangible experience.

So much is Updike a novelist of experience and its normative repercussions that a plot *précis* as such can be misleading; Updike is concerned with experience in its fullness, not events in their succession, and what happens in his fiction is not mirrored accurately by a historical timetable. This is not to say that his fiction is the fiction of pure sensibility. Up-

dike—partly by means of a perspective maintained carefully by an empathizing yet detached narrator—is concerned with experience: not simply what happens or what a character feels, but with the whole complex of interactions among events, perception, emotion, and reflection that makes up experience.

With these qualifications of plot in mind, the action of *Rabbit, Run* can be summarized. Harry Angstrom, nicknamed "Rabbit," was once an extraordinary high school basketball player. He is now, at twenty-six, a salesman of a household gimmick, "Magipeel." He has a mousy, somewhat alcoholic, pregnant wife Janice and a small son, Nelson. On a spring afternoon Rabbit, full of the energy of the season, stops to play basketball with a group of teenage boys. In the game, in the memories it brings to him and in the air there is a promise of life. But at home he finds his wife drinking and watching a children's television program; she has made a stupid purchase; and she has left their son at his parents' house and their car at hers. Rabbit goes to collect these, but, when he gets to his parents' house, he gives in to a sudden impulse to run away. He picks up the car

and begins to drive, feeling furtive, never quite free, even though he drives all the way into West Virginia; finally, for no special reason except that he does not feel the freedom he had hoped for, he turns back.

Instead of going home, he seeks out his former basketball coach, Marty Tothero, who, since Rabbit's high school days, has been fired for being involved in a scandal and now lives in a broken-down hotel. Rabbit goes to him, presumably, for advice; Tothero seems at first willing to give it but finally does nothing more than get him a bed for the day and, for the evening, a date with Ruth Leonard, a sometime prostitute. Rabbit pays her to take him home; they make love, and he decides to move in with her.

The next morning, Palm Sunday, he goes back to his apartment to pick up some clothes. Jack Eccles, a young Episcopalian minister, is there; he has been asked by Janice's family to help them. Rather than pressure Rabbit, however, Eccles, a progressive, "soft-sell" minister, merely talks to him and arranges a golf date for two days later.

Under the direction of Eccles, an interim arrangement is established. Rabbit works as a gardener for Mrs. Horace Smith, plays golf with the minister, and continues to live with Ruth. Eccles, on whom the novel now begins to focus, visits Rabbit's and Janice's parents, searching for the core of the problem, finding nothing but inertia. Rabbit pushes Ruth towards a kind of total intimacy that finally, ironically, comes to stand between them; he also gets her pregnant. When Janice's baby is born, Rabbit deserts Ruth, comes home, takes a new job in his father-in-law's used car lot, and, for a short while, feels wonderful. But when Janice comes home, he wants to make love; she, of course, cannot. He leaves looking for Ruth but finally spends the night in a hotel, and Janice begins to drink. Finally, completely drunk, she tries to give the baby, Rebecca, a bath and accidentally drowns her. Rab-

bit comes back once again. But at the burial, after pleading that he is innocent, he cannot stand what he thinks are the accusing stares of the mourners and he runs again. He goes to Ruth, pleads with her to have their baby; she too rejects him. With his guilt and responsibilities crowding him, he begins once again to run.

Rabbit Angstrom embodies a vital principle; his name suggests animal and electrical energy, unhumanized. Running is the pure expression of this energy, whether it be toward or away from something, or, as in the end, just running. Once, as a high school basketball player, Rabbit had found an organized human use for that energy; now he finds only an occasional productive outlet for it—making love, working in Mrs. Smith's garden, hitting one good golf shot, taking care of his clothes. For the most part he finds that human involvements frustrate his natural energies and that his gracefulness and desire for the kind of beauty he found in basketball games are resented by others.

By making the minister and his wife Lucy important characters in the novel, Updike suggests that Rabbit presents not simply a social problem, but also a quasi-theological one. Eccles, foolish and often ridiculous, is nonetheless a minister trying to minister, and he points to a truth about Rabbit: that Rabbit (Updike suggests this very lightly) is suffering a religious crisis, even *the* religious crisis, of separation from God, and the concomitant modern crisis of a lack of faith in the presence of some Grace by which God will bridge this separation. Eccles is the last of a series of should-be guides for Rabbit, following his parents and his coach. From Eccles's point of view—and Eccles's point of view is included in the novel—Rabbit is a special case, for Rabbit has, or seems to have a physical and emotional, if not quite spiritual, "touch": Rabbit has experienced some of the things that Eccles must assume. He knows Grace, at least in its physical analogues; hence the enigmatic epigram

from Pascal: "The motions of Grace, the hardness of the heart; external circumstances."

Rabbit is also the beginning of something special for Updike. In this novel, he begins to go beyond the bounds of realism, or rather to probe for a meaningful use of both realistic and mythic materials. Here he probes the living myths of contemporary America; the belief in physicality, the paradoxes of escape and movement, the image of the athlete as

the cultural hero, the legends of love. He does so with considerable success. Indeed, it is arguable, though at this early date relatively unimportant, that *Rabbit, Run* is Updike's finest work in its picture of life lived on the edge of the abyss, of youth without spiritual resource, of a society which breeds emotional waste and squalor because of its disregard for the gap between fact and value in the lives of the unready and the immature.

THE RAMBLER

Type of work: Periodical essays

Author: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

First published: 1750-1752

Regularly every Tuesday and Saturday during the years 1750 to 1752 Samuel Johnson published one of the more than two hundred essays that make up the *Rambler*. He records in one of the later papers the difficulties a man with his procrastinating temperament had in meeting a regular deadline like this one, and he indicates that many of his brief moralizing works were hastily composed and sent off to the press unrevised. It is thus especially remarkable that his essays give such a uniformly polished, coherent effect. The style is throughout dignified, and balanced, and the arguments of the moral and philosophical dissertations are inevitably clear and logical.

Johnson departed in the *Rambler* from the typical pattern of the popular eighteenth century periodical essay as it was developed by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. He considered his role as essayist to be that of teacher, rather than that of entertainer. While he included a number of amusing sketches in his collection, even the most humorous have moral overtones, and the majority of the papers are general comments on human faults and weaknesses. He indicates that some of his readers protested at the prevailing tone of seriousness in his work, but he did not

yield to their criticism; it is only in his later groups of essays, the *Idler* and the *Adventurer*, that he allowed his mood to mellow and consented to discuss lighter topics in a less lofty style than that of the *Rambler*.

One philosophical theme runs throughout all of the *Rambler* essays, giving unity to the diverse topics Johnson treated, that of the "Vanity of Human Wishes," the futility of man's quest for happiness in riches, fame, beauty, success in business, society, marriage, or friendship. Johnson speaks with deep understanding of the way human beings tend to live always in the future, forever hoping for the improvement of their states, improvement that rarely comes. He begins his second essay by remarking that "the mind of man is never satisfied with the objects immediately before it, but is always breaking away from the present moment, and losing itself in schemes of future felicity; and that we forget the proper use of the time, now in our power, to provide for the enjoyment of that which, perhaps, may never be granted us has been frequently remarked. . . ."

Johnson treated this general theme in a number of different ways, sometimes speaking in the abstract about the nature of fame, hope, or the uses of time, some-

times implying the same conclusions by relating the histories of individuals. He many times created imaginary correspondents whose letters he reproduces without comment, leaving the reader to draw the obvious conclusions.

Cupidus, for example, whose name suggests greed, writes to the Rambler about his long, frustrating wait for riches. The estate that was to be his had been left to his three aunts during their lifetime, and he passed many years in anxious inquiries about the state of their health, fearing that they might marry and leave heirs of their own and despairing of ever gaining his fortune. When the third sister finally died at the age of ninety-four, Cupidus expected to find happiness at last. Yet he confesses at the end of his letter that his joy was short-lived. "I had formed schemes which I cannot execute, I had supposed events which did not come to pass, and the rest of my life must pass in craving solitude, unless you can find some remedy for a mind, corrupted with an inveterate disease of wishing, and unable to think on anything but wants, which reason tells me will never be supplied."

Another letter relates the tribulations of Victoria, who was raised by her mother to assume that beauty was the single goal to be achieved in life; she spent her childhood in learning the accomplishments of a lady of fashion and protecting her complexion and her figure, and she was duly introduced to society, where she was flattered and fussed over until she contracted smallpox. When she recovered, she found that her looks, and with them all the attention she had had in the past, had vanished. She writes that she now realizes the necessity for valuing more permanent qualities than beauty; time would have banished her fair appearance if disease had not.

In addition to numerous letters such as these, Johnson wrote several Oriental fables, similar to his *Rasselas*, to illustrate his moral themes. He tells of Obidah, a Near Eastern gentleman who set forth

across a beautiful plain one morning, following those paths that seemed to him loveliest, confident that they led him in the direction of the main road toward his destination, and then discovered that he was hopelessly lost. This tale illustrates, as the hermit who rescued Obidah and sent him on his way, says: "Human life is the journey of a day. We rise in the morning of youth, full of vigour and full of expectation; we set forward with spirit and hope . . . and travel on a while in the straight road of piety towards the mansions of rest." Gradually we are drawn away from this road by our search for ease and pleasure, until "the darkness of old age begins to invade us, and disease and anxiety obstruct our way. We then look back upon our lives with horror, with sorrow, with repentance; and wish, but too often vainly wish, that we had not forsaken the ways of virtue." Other fables point up the folly of trusting in wealth to provide loyal friends or popularity, the advantages of moderate wants, and the impossibility of trusting absolutely in anyone but God.

Although such themes as these recur most often in the *Rambler*, Johnson dealt with a number of other subjects as well. He devotes several essays to marriage and the problems of those alliances based on wealth, social position, or even on affection that rested on insufficient knowledge of character. He also treats the follies of the housewife who has no interests but in her pies and her embroidery, of the mother who is so anxious to be the center of society that she is violently jealous of her own growing daughter, of the London belle who longs for the idyllic quiet of the countryside, then finds that she has no inner resources for amusing herself when she is removed from balls, card games, plays, and concerts. These brief, witty character sketches, in which Johnson most resembles Addison and Steele, provide welcome light intervals in otherwise serious volumes.

There is, interspersed throughout the *Rambler*, a considerable number of essays

that contain serious literary criticism. One of the first of these works, a discussion of the writing of fiction, sets forth Johnson's conviction that literature has an important didactic function. He points out the dangers he sees in the modern novel, which is aimed primarily at impressionable young people. Since this kind of work is as true to life as its author can make it, its characters are apt to be taken as models by youthful readers. Johnson is particularly disturbed by the tendency to present characters who combine large measures of both virtue and vice: "There have been men, indeed, splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness on their crimes, and whom scarce any villainy made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellences; but such have been in all ages the great corrupters of the world, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved, than the art of murdering without pain."

Johnson wrote several highly technical essays on Milton's versification in *Paradise Lost*, pointing out the genius and the flaws in the sounds of his words, the cadences of his lines, and his handling of technical problems of metrics. Of greater interest than these specialized discussions is Johnson's critical analysis of Milton's blank verse tragedy, *Samson Agonistes*. He praises the poem for its wisdom, its moral tone, and the beauty of many of

the passages, but he feels that it fails to fulfill Aristotle's principle that the action of a drama must lead inevitably to the catastrophe. Johnson contends that the scenes with Manoa, Delilah, and Harapha that compose the body of Milton's play have no real bearing on the conclusion and that consequently, in spite of its virtues, the drama is a failure.

Johnson concluded the *Rambler* papers with a statement of what he felt he had accomplished in his essays, freely admitting that the nature of the publication made unevenness in the quality of various selections inevitable. He expresses the hope that he has been able in his works to "refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations," and that he has "added to the elegance of its construction, and something to the harmony of its cadence."

He makes no apology for the prevailing tone of seriousness; his "principal design," he states firmly, was "to inculcate wisdom or piety." He sees his papers on "the idle sports of imagination" and his literary criticism as distinctly subordinate to the moral essays, and he concludes with his desire that he may be "numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth."

THE REAL LIFE OF SEBASTIAN KNIGHT

Type of work: Novel

Author: Vladimir Nabokov (1899-)

Time: 1899-1938

Locale: England and Europe

First published: 1938

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, written in Paris in 1938 but not published in the United States until 1941, is Vladimir Nabokov's first work in English; previously he had written in Russian. Although this earlier novel does not show quite the same ingenious con-

juring with language as do *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, it is, none the less, a brilliant, sometimes funny, and almost perversely complex book.

The novel is written as a biography of Sebastian Knight, a writer who has just died, by his younger half brother

who designates himself only as V. Beginning as an attempt to present the real Sebastian, V.'s biography becomes the quest of V. himself to understand the personality of the man revealed by his search. Two problems, therefore, run as concurrent themes through the novel: first, the problem of communication between a writer and his readers, the task of conveying reality with precision, and, secondly, the greater problem of what this reality is—the multiple views possible of the same thing and the necessarily unsuccessful attempt to capture anything so elusive as personal identity. The novel presents a dazzling series of masks, none of which may be removed completely because knowing more about Sebastian Knight does not help us to understand him but rather increases his complexity.

Within the novel are three different literary attempts to portray Sebastian. The first is V.'s own earnest, painstaking effort to portray his brother objectively. At the opposite extreme is a slick, superficial biography, already published, by Mr. Goodman, Sebastian's former secretary. But V. admits in quoting from it at length that even this book contains elements of truth. Somewhere in the middle are Sebastian's own novels, which reveal obliquely something of the man himself, even though we can never be sure of how much they disclose.

V.'s first-hand knowledge of Sebastian, colored by the adoration of a younger brother for the clever older one and by V.'s nostalgia for Russia, is confined to Sebastian's youth. Sebastian had been born in Russia; his English mother, a restless, romantic woman, deserted her husband and baby; his father remarried. Sebastian left Russia for Cambridge and remained in England, becoming almost a caricature of an Englishman and writing his novels in England. At this point in his biography, V. must search for people who knew Sebastian, for V. saw almost nothing of him after he left Russia, and their few meetings were cold and strained.

V.'s search for the truth becomes a kind of detective novel, but an enigmatic and paradoxical one. His elaborate quest is continually frustrated—by someone's inability to remember, by his own timidity, by his willingness to content himself with an intuitive impression, almost as if he does not wish to have any illusions shattered. One is reminded of Sebastian's own first novel, a parody of a detective story; indeed, the quotations from Sebastian's writing provide not only a glimpse of his real self but also an insight into this novel, for one might say of it that he employed parody as a means of achieving effects of serious thought and feeling. This novel of Sebastian's, called *The Prismatic Bezel*, also hints at the many-faceted obliquity of Nabokov's novel.

V.'s quest degenerates into a melodramatic farce. He finds the woman whom Sebastian loved and tricks her into an admission of her identity, but again he contents himself with his own impression of her and his own estimate of the effect she must have had on his brother. Nabokov weaves parallel situations from Sebastian's novels and from his and the narrator's life into a glittering web which conceals as much as it reveals. One cannot know another person because countless factors of which one is totally unaware intervene. His method is the juxtaposition of a series of glimpses, absurd and touching, like a series of sleight-of-hand tricks. One cannot tell what is the trickery of legerdemain and what is not.

Two incidents, one near the beginning, the other at the end of the book, illuminate its meaning. On one of his trips to Europe, Sebastian finds a village called Roquebrune, the town where his mother had died. He finds her house and sits for a long time in the garden, trying to find the mother whom he scarcely knew. At length, he can almost see her figure, like some pastel ghost, gliding up the stairs to the door. Much later, he discovers by accident that the Roquebrune he had found was not even

the same town where his mother had lived, but another, many miles away. There is something funny and pathetic in his own deception, something which undercuts and transcends the experience. Its meaning is made clearer by the end of the book. V. had been in Marseilles when he received a telegram telling him Sebastian was seriously ill. After many delays he finds the hospital, has some difficulties in making the porter understand him, but is eventually shown into the room where the Englishman, still alive, is sleeping. He spends only a few minutes there, but he feels he can at last express the kinship he has always felt with his brother, that at last these moments listening to the sound of his breathing have crystallized a whole series of other moments as words could not have done. Yet, on leaving the room, he discovers by chance that this man was not his brother at all, for Sebastian had died the day before. But he says that later he found his life transformed by the short time he spent in the dying man's company. He now believed that the soul—any man's soul—is a way of being rather than a constant state; therefore souls are constantly in flux and interchangeable. V. feels that he is Sebastian Knight; he

wears his mask. Sebastian may even be V., or both may be someone they never knew. In this mood he begins to write his brother's biography.

One cannot, of course, know another person completely, for one cannot know oneself. The fact that V. goes on to write Sebastian's biography proves that he has understood for only a moment. But the existence of a series of masks does not necessarily mean that nothing lies behind them, only that one can penetrate no further.

Nabokov's method is oblique, moving as does the chess knight who must leap in two directions and skip over intervening pieces, because our knowledge of identity must be reached obliquely. This novel is at once a fascinating puzzle and a profound statement, whose depths are disguised as absurdities. It is technically not the *tour de force* which *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* are, but its discussions of the relationship between the writer and his art reveal much about the author's own technique. Its themes are similar to those of his other works, as is its deliberate comic view, which approaches within a hair's-breadth of the tragic. This book is at once a witty bit of hocus-pocus and a fine and moving novel.

THE REIVERS

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: May, 1905

Locale: Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi; Memphis and Parsham, Tennessee

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

LUCIUS PRIEST, the narrator, eleven years old at the time of the story
BOON HOGGANBECK, a part-Chickasaw Indian and the poorest shot in the county

NED WILLIAM McCASLIN, the Priests' coachman, a colored member of the McCaslin and Priest families

LUCIUS QUINTUS PRIEST, called "Boss," young Lucius' grandfather, a Jefferson banker and owner of the stolen Winton Flyer

MISS SARAH, his wife

MAURY PRIEST, his son, young Lucius' father

MISS ALISON, Mrs. Maury Priest

MISS REBA RIVERS, the proprietress of a Memphis brothel

EVERBE CORINTHIA, called Miss Corrie, one of Miss Reba's girls, loved
 by Boon Hogganbeck
 MR. BINFORD, Miss Reba's landlord and protector
 MINNIE, Miss Reba's maid
 OTIS, Miss Corrie's delinquent nephew from Arkansas
 SAM CALDWELL, a railroad brakeman and Boon's rival, who aids in
 transporting the stolen racehorse
 UNCLE PARSHAM HOOD, a dignified old colored man who befriends
 young Lucius Priest
 LYCURGUS BRIGGINS, his grandson
 BUTCH LOVEMAIDEN, a brutal deputy sheriff
 McWILLIE, the rider of Acheron
 COLONEL LINSComb, the owner of Acheron
 MR. VAN TOSCH, the owner of Coppermine, the stolen racehorse re-
 named Lightning
 BOBO BEAUCHAMP, Mr. van Tosch's stableboy and Ned William Mc-
 Caslin's cousin
 DELPHINE, Ned's wife, the Priests' cook

Subtitled "A Reminiscence," *The Reivers* begins on a note of action recalled in memory, and about a fourth of the way through the novel, posthumously awarded the 1963 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, we come upon one of William Faulkner's most engaging yarns.

In 1905 eleven-year-old Lucius Priest, Boon Hogganbeck, tough, faithful, but completely unpredictable and unreliable part-Chickasaw Indian mad about machinery, and freeloading Ned William McCaslin, the Priests' colored coachman and handyman, are on their way to Memphis in the Winton Flyer owned by young Lucius' grandfather and "borrowed" for the excursion without the owner's permission or knowledge. Because of the condition of the roads the truants are forced to make an overnight stop at Miss Ballenbaugh's, a small country store with a loft above it containing shuck mattresses for the convenience of fishermen and fox or coon hunters. The next morning, after one of the breakfasts for which Miss Ballenbaugh is famous, they start out early and soon reach Hell Creek bottom, the deepest, miriest mud-hole in all Mississippi. There is no way around it: started in one direction, the travelers would end up in Alabama; head in the other, and they would fall into the Mississippi. Of course the automobile be-

comes mired and remains stuck in spite of their labors with shovel, barbed wire, block and tackle, and piled branches. Meanwhile on the gallery of a paintless cabin nearby, his two mules already harnessed in plow gear, a barefooted redneck watches and waits. This backwoods opportunist remarks that mud is one of the best crops in the region when the three give up in exasperation and he appears to pull the car out of the slough. Then follows some stiff bargaining. Boon claims that six dollars is too much for the job, all the more so because one of his passengers is a boy and the other is black. The man's only answer is that his mules are color-blind.

This is the tall-story idiom and spirit of Huck Finn brought forward in time, but its presence in *The Reivers* is not so much a matter of imitation as of a common source. For there is a sense in which Faulkner stands at the end of a literary tradition rather than, as many of his admirers claim, at the beginning of a new one. Through all of his writing runs a strain of broad folk humor and comic invention going back through Mark Twain to A. B. Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* and George W. Harris' *Sut Lovingood's Yarns*, and beyond them to the Davy Crockett almanacs and the anonymous masters of oral anecdote who flourished

in the old Southwest. The early American was by nature a storyteller. The realities of frontier life and his own hard comic sense created a literature of tall men and tall deeds repeated in the trading post, the groggery, the rafters' camp, wherever men met on the edge of the wilderness. These stories, shaped by the common experience and imagination, had a geography, a mythology, and a lingo of their own. Some were streaked with ballad sentiment. Others guffawed with bawdy humor. But mostly these tales were comic elaborations of character, of fantastic misadventures in which the frontiersman dramatized himself with shrewd appraisal and salty enjoyment. Through them goes a raggle-taggle procession of hunters, peddlers, horse traders, horse thieves, eagle orators, prophets, backwoods swains, land speculators, settlers—a picture of the country and the times.

Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County lies, after all, in the same geographical belt with the Mississippi River and the Natchez Trace, and these are regions of history, folklore, and fantasy revealed in tall-story humor. This humor came into Faulkner's fiction as early as *Mosquitoes*, in the account of Old Hickory's descendant who tried raising sheep in the Louisiana swamps and eventually became so much at home in the water that he turned into a shark. It contributes to effects of grotesque outrage and exaggeration in *As I Lay Dying*, gives *Light in August* a warming pastoral glow, adds three episodes of pure comedy to *The Hamlet*, and provides illuminating comment on the rise and fall of Flem Snopes. Faulkner's habit in the past, however, was to subordinate his racier effects to the more serious concerns of man's mortality and the disorder of his moral universe. Not until he wrote *The Reivers* did he give free play to his talent for comedy of character and situation and, like Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn*, make it the master bias of structure and theme.

Other parallels with Twain's novel are

not lacking. One is the unmistakable flavor of a style derived from the drawled tones of reminiscence. If we turn back to the nineteenth chapter of *Huckleberry Finn* we see how this style was being shaped to reveal habits of thought and feeling in art, a truly colloquial style, marvelously tuned in pulse and improvisation, with the incorrectness of folk speech in its idiom as Lucius Priest tells his story to his grandson. In *The Reivers* it is made to support both a burden of feeling within a boy's range of response and an old man's accumulation of a lifetime's reflections; and it can record sensory impressions with poetic finality.

Like *Huckleberry Finn*, too, *The Reivers* is a story of initiation, of innocence corrupted and evil exorcised. Both show the world through the eyes of childhood, an effective device when employed as a freshener of experience or a corrective of judgment, but between the two novels there is this important difference: Huck is protected by the earthy nonchalance of his own native shrewdness and resourcefulness from the contamination of the shore. Young Lucius Priest lives by the code of his class, the code of a gentleman, and he brings its values to the bordello and the racetrack. The true test is not innocence itself but what lies behind the mask of innocence. Grandfather Priest claims that when adults speak of childish innocence, they really mean ignorance. Actually, children are neither, in his opinion, for an eleven-year-old can envision any crime. If he possesses innocence, it is probably lack of appetite, just as his ignorance may be a lack of opportunity or ability.

So young Lucius Priest had only the gentleman's code to protect him when his grandfather, the president of a Jefferson bank and the owner of the second automobile ever seen in the county, goes to Louisiana to attend a funeral and Boon Hogganbeck tempts the boy with a proposal that they drive the Winton Flyer to Memphis during its owner's absence. Lucius proves vulnerable to Boon's proposal

and after considerable conniving they set out. On the way they discover Ned William McCaslin hidden under a tarpaulin on the back seat. Having passed Hell Creek bottom, they arrive in Memphis, but instead of going to the Gayoso Hotel, as Lucius expected (the McCaslins and Priests always stayed at the Gayoso because a distant member of the family had in Civil War times galloped into the lobby in an effort to capture a Yankee general), Boon drives his passengers to Miss Reba's house on Catalpa Street. (This is the same Miss Reba, grown older, who figures in *Sanctuary*.) Boon has his reasons; Miss Corrie, one of Miss Reba's girls, shares with the Winton Flyer the affections of his crude but open and innocent heart. That night Ned, a master of indirection and a reckless gambling man, trades the stolen automobile for a stolen racehorse never known to run better than second. Before the three can return to Jefferson it is necessary for young Lucius to turn jockey and win a race against a better horse, Colonel Lincomb's Acheron. Meanwhile he has fought with Otis, the vicious nephew who slurred Miss Corrie, and his chivalric gesture restores her self-respect. Boon and Ned become involved in difficulties with the law as represented by Butch Love- maiden, a corrupt deputy sheriff; it is discovered that Otis has stolen the gold tooth prized by Minnie, Miss Reba's maid; and Boon finds, and fights, rivals for Miss Corrie's charms. As the result of all this Lucius, forced to assume a gentleman's responsibilities of courage and conduct, has lost the innocence of childhood before his grandfather appears to set matters straight. At times the boy is close to despair but he realizes that he has come too far, that to turn back now would not be homesickness but shame.

Lucius survives his ordeal, but at considerable cost to his conscience and peace of mind. Grandfather Priest has the final word on his escapade. When the boy asks how he can forget his folly and guilt, his grandfather tells him that he can't be-

cause nothing in life is ever forgotten or lost. Lucius wants to know what he can do. His grandfather says that he must live with it. To the weeping boy's protests he replies that a gentleman can live through anything because he must always accept the responsibility of his actions and the weight of their consequences. Grandfather Priest ends by telling Lucius to go wash his face; a gentleman may cry, but he washes his face afterward.

From these examples it will be seen that under its surface of fantastic invention and tall-story humor *The Reivers* is another moral fable in the Faulknerian manner. Yet it is quite different in effect from the earlier, darker studies of manners and morals. In tragedy, and Faulkner was a great tragic artist, the soul of man stands naked before God, and He is not mocked. In comedy it is not the possible in man that is to be revealed but the probable in conduct or belief. Thus, man in comedy is viewed in relation to some aspect of his society. In *The Reivers*—the title means plunderers or freebooters—a master of comedy was at work testing young Lucius Priest by the behavior of a gentleman in a world of evasion and deceit where it is easier to run from one's responsibilities than to stand up and face them.

In setting these matters straight, the triumph of the novel is in the manner of the telling. *The Reivers* is a story about a boy, but it is told by a man grown old enough and wise enough through the years of accumulated experience to look back on his adventure, relish it in all its qualities of adventure and fantasy, and at the same time pass judgment on it. This judgment is never harsh. Lucius Priest, telling the story to his grandson, is revealed as a person of tolerance and understanding of much that is so deeply and irrevocably ingrained in the eternal condition of man, and his point of view gives the novel added depth and dimension.

Put beside the novels of his great period, *The Reivers* is minor Faulkner. At

the same time it is a good yarn in the tall-story tradition, skillfully told, comic in effect, shrewd in observation on manners, morals, politics, and the general cussed-

ness and downright foolishness of mankind. More to the point, it broadens even if it does not deepen our knowledge of Faulkner's legendary Mississippi county.

THE RENAISSANCE

Type of work: Essays in art appreciation and criticism

Author: Walter Pater (1839-1894)

First published: 1873

In the preface to *The Renaissance*, originally titled *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater writes, "The subjects of the following studies . . . touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement." The subjects themselves are the French, Italian, and German writers, painters, and sculptors, ranging from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, in whose lives and in whose works Pater finds represented the many sides, the divergent attitudes and aims, of the Renaissance.

Pater's method is impressionistic. The task of the aesthetic critic, he says, is first to realize distinctly the exact impression which a work of art makes upon him, then to determine the source and conditions—the "virtue"—of that impression, and finally to express that virtue so that the impression it has made on him may be shared by others. *The Renaissance* is largely the record of the impressions induced in the refined temperament of Walter Pater by the art he studies.

The Renaissance, for Pater, was "not merely the revival of classical antiquity which took place in the fifteenth century . . . but a whole complex movement, of which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element or symptom." Accordingly, in the first chapter, he finds the roots of the movement in thirteenth century France, illustrated in the prose romances, *Li Amitiez de Ami et Amile* and *Aucassin et Nicolette*. It is in their "spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time" that these tales prefigure that later "out-

break of the reason and the imagination," the high Renaissance of fifteenth century Italy.

One important part of that later Renaissance, says Pater, was the effort made by fifteenth century Italian scholars "to reconcile Christianity with the religion of ancient Greece." Pico della Mirandola typified that effort, both in his writings and in his life; he was "reconciled indeed to the new religion, but still [had] a tenderness for the earlier life." Lacking the historic sense, Pico and his contemporaries sought in vain, as Pater saw it, a reconciliation based on allegorical interpretations of religious belief; "the Renaissance of the fifteenth century was . . . great, rather by what it designed . . . than by what it actually achieved."

In discussing Botticelli, Pater acknowledges that he is a painter, of secondary rank, not great as Michelangelo and Leonardo are great. Nonetheless his work has a distinct quality, "the result of a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition . . . with his consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks." He is a forcible realist and a visionary painter as well. Part of his appeal to Pater is simply in this, that "he has the freshness, the uncertain and diffident promise which belong to the earlier Renaissance"—that age which Pater called "perhaps the most interesting period in the history of the mind."

The chapter titled "Luca della Robbia" is as much about sculpture in general as it is about Luca. The limitation of sculp-

ture, says Pater, is that it tends toward "a hard realism, a one-sided presentment of mere form." The Greeks countered this tendency by depicting the type rather than the individual, by purging the accidental until "their works came to be like some subtle extract or essence, or almost like pure thoughts or ideas." But this sacrificed *expression*. Michelangelo "with a genius spiritualised by the reverie of the middle age," offset the tendency of sculpture towards realism by "leaving nearly all his sculpture in a puzzling sort of incompleteness, which suggests rather than realises actual form." Luca della Robbia and other fifteenth century Tuscan sculptors achieved "a profound expressiveness" by working in low relief earthenware, the subtle delineation of line serving as the means of overcoming the special limitation of sculpture.

In "The Poetry of Michelangelo" we find out less about the poetry itself than we do about Pater's impressions of it. No one, says Pater, need be reminded of the strength of Michelangelo's work. There is, however, another and equally important quality of his work, and that Pater refers to variously as "charm," "sweetness," and "a lovely strangeness." It is in a "brooding spirit of life," achieved through an idealization of life's "vehement sentiments," that this quality of sweetness resides. There were, says Pater, two traditions of the ideal which Michelangelo might have followed: that of Dante, who idealized the material world, and that of Platonism. It was the Platonic tradition that molded Michelangelo's verse; "Michelangelo is always pressing forward from the outward beauty . . . to apprehend the unseen beauty . . . that abstract form of beauty, about which the Platonists reason." Yet the influence of Dante is there too, in the sentiment of imaginative love. To Pater, Michelangelo was "the last . . . of those on whom the peculiar sentiment of the Florence of Dante and Giotto descended: he is the consummate representative of the form that sentiment took in the fif-

teenth century." In this sentiment is another source of his "grave and temperate sweetness."

The fifteenth century witnessed two movements: the return to antiquity represented, says Pater, by Raphael and the return to nature represented by Leonardo da Vinci. In Leonardo the return to nature took on a special coloring, for Leonardo's genius was composed not only of a desire for beauty but also of a curiosity which gave to his paintings "a type of subtle and curious grace." His landscapes, as in the background of his masterpiece, *La Gioconda*, partake of the "bizarre of *recherché*." One of the most famous passages in the book is Pater's description of *La Gioconda*. Pater sees in the Mona Lisa the image of archetypal woman: "All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded" her features.

In "The School of Giorgione" (which did not appear in the first edition), Pater propounds his famous dictum that "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music." The "condition of music" is a complete fusing, an interpenetration, of matter and form. The other arts achieve perfection in the degree that they approach or approximate this condition. Giorgione and others of the Venetian school are representative of the aspiration towards perfect identification of matter and form in their realization that "painting must be before all things decorative." Their subjects are from life, but "mere subject" is subordinated to "pictorial design," so that matter is interpenetrated by form.

In the chapter on Joachim du Bellay, Pater turns from Italy to France, to the theories and the elegant verse of the *Pleiad*. Du Bellay wrote a tract in which he sought "to adjust the existing French culture to the rediscovered classical culture." In this tract, says Pater, the Renaissance became aware of itself as a systematic movement. The ambition of the *Pleiad* was to combine the "music of the measured, scanned verse of Latin and

Greek poetry" with "the music of the rhymed, unscanned verse of Villon and the old French poets."

The longest chapter of *The Renaissance* is devoted to Johann Joachim Winckelmann, a German scholar in the study of antiquity. His importance, for Pater, is chiefly that he influenced Goethe: "Goethe illustrates a union of the Romantic spirit . . . with Hellenism . . . that marriage . . . of which the art of the nineteenth century is the child." The Hellenic element, characterized by "breadth, centrality, with blitheness and repose," was made known to Goethe by Winckelmann. Winckelmann stands, then, as a link between antiquity (and the Renaissance) and the modern, post-Enlightenment world.

The most celebrated part of the book—and indeed of Pater's entire body of writing—is the conclusion to *The Renaissance*. Here he utters the famous, and frequently misinterpreted, dicta: "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end" and "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." These statements must be seen in the context of Pater's conception of the nature of human existence.

For Pater reality is human experience. It consists not in the objective, material world but in the impressions of color, odor, and texture which that world pro-

duces in the observer's mind. Each impression endures for but a single moment and then is gone. Life is made up of the succession of these momentary impressions, and life itself is brief.

Not to make the most of these moments, not to experience them fully, is to waste a lifetime. "What we have to do," says Pater, "is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions." Given the brevity of our lives and given as well the brevity of the very impressions which constitute our lives, "we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch." Hence, "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end."

This emphasis on experience also leads Pater to distinguish among kinds of experience, and the highest kind, he says, is the great passions (themselves a kind of wisdom) we gain from art. "For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass"—a life constituted of such moments will indeed "burn always" with a "hard, gemlike flame."

Pater omitted the conclusion from the second edition of the book, fearing "it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall." Having explained his beliefs more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* and having altered the conclusion slightly, he restored it to later editions.

REPRESENTATIVE MEN

Type of work: Biographical essays

Author: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

First published: 1850

Emerson's *Representative Men* was first presented as a course of lectures in Boston in the winter of 1845-1846 and later during his visit to England in 1847. The volume opens with a discussion of the uses of great men and follows with six chapters on men who represent Man in six aspects: Plato as philosopher, Swedenborg as mystic, Montaigne as skeptic,

Shakespeare as poet, Napoleon as man of the world, and Goethe as writer.

The book has often been mentioned in connection with Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, published in 1841, but where Carlyle saw the hero as a divinely gifted individual above and apart from the common man, Emerson conceived of the great man as a lens through which

men may see themselves. For Emerson the great man is one who through superior endowments "inhabits a higher sphere of thought, into which other men rise with labor and difficulty. . . ." Such men may give direct material or metaphysical aid, but more frequently they serve indirectly by the inspiration of their accomplishment of things and by their introduction to us of ideas. The great man does stirring deeds; he reveals knowledge and wisdom; he shows depths of emotion—and others resolve to emulate him. He accomplishes intellectual feats of memory, of abstract thought, of imaginative flights, and dull minds are brightened by his light. But the true genius does not tyrannize; he liberates those who know him. For Emerson, all men are infinitely receptive in capacity; they need only the wise man to rouse them, to clear their eyes and make them see, to feed and refresh them. Yet even the great man has limits of availability. We get from one what we can and pass on to another who can nourish mind or spirit or titillate a dulled palate. As we are infinitely receptive, so are we eternally hungry; and as we find sustenance, through us the spirit of the world's great men diffuses itself. Thus, through the ages the cumulative effect of great men is that they prepare the way for greater men.

Emerson views the representative philosopher Plato as an exhausting generalizer, a symbol of philosophy itself, a thinker whom men of all nations in all times recognize as kin to themselves. He absorbed the learning of his times, but Emerson sees in him a modern style and spirit identifying him with later ages as well. Plato honors the ideal, or laws of the mind, and fate, or the order of nature. Plato defines. He sees Unity, or Identity, on the one hand and Variety on the other. In him is found the idea (not original, it is true) of one deity in whom all things are absorbed. A balanced soul, Plato sees both the real and the ideal. He propounds the principle of absolute good, but he illustrates from the world around

him. In this ability lies his power and charm. He is a great average man in whom other men see their own dreams and thoughts. He acknowledges the Ineffable and yet asserts that things are knowable; a lover of limits, he yet loves the illimitable. For Plato, virtue cannot be taught; it is divinely inspired. It is through Socrates that we learn much of Plato's philosophy, and to Emerson the older philosopher is a man of Franklin-like wisdom, a plain old uncle with great ears, an immense talker, a hard-headed humorist, an Aesop of the mob to whom the robed scholar Plato owed a great debt.

For Emerson the two principal defects of Plato as a philosopher are, first, that he is intellectual and therefore always literary, and second, that he has no system. He sees so much that he argues first on one side and then on another. Finally, says Emerson, the way to know Plato is to compare him, not with nature (an enigma now, as it was to Plato), but with other men and to see that through the ages none have approached him.

Emerson would have preferred to discuss Jesus as the representative mystic, but to do so would have meant sailing into dangerous waters: the orthodox believers of the time would probably have objected to the inclusion of Jesus as a representative *man*. Emerson chose Swedenborg instead, but in reading this chapter of the book one gets the notion that Emerson was forcing himself to praise this eighteenth century mystic. Emerson remarks that this colossal soul, as he calls him, requires a long focal distance to be seen. Looking more closely, he finds in Swedenborg a style "lustrous with points and shooting spiculae of thought, and resembling one of those winter mornings when the air sparkles with crystals." He summarizes some of Swedenborg's leading ideas: "the universality of each law in nature; the Platonic doctrine of the scale or degrees; the version or conversion of each into other, and so the correspondence of all the parts; the

fine secret that little explains large, and large, little; the centrality of man in nature, and the connection that subsists throughout all things." He quotes a passage of Swedenborgian theology which must have appealed to the Unitarian Emerson: "Man is a kind of very minute heaven, corresponding to the world of spirits and to heaven. Every particular idea of man, and every affection, yea, every smallest part of his affection, is an image and effigy of him. A spirit may be known from only a single thought. God is the grand old man." Yet when Emerson comes to the Swedenborgian mystical view that each natural object has a definite symbolic value—as, a horse signifies carnal understanding; a tree, perception; the moon, faith—he rebels at its narrowness. As for Swedenborg's theological writings in general, Emerson complains of their immense and sandy diffuseness and their delirious incongruities. Emerson warns that such a book as Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love* should be used with caution, and he suggests that a contemplative young man might read these mysteries of love and conscience once, and then throw them aside for ever. As Emerson continues his examination he finds Swedenborg's heavens and hells dull, he objects to the theologic determination of Swedenborg's mind and to the failure of Swedenborg in attaching himself "to the Christian symbol, instead of to the moral sentiment, which carries innumerable christianities, humanities, divinities, in its bosom." When Emerson imagines the impatient reader complaining, "What have I to do with jasper and sardonyx, beryl and chalcedony," and so on, Emerson's own writing awakes as from a semi-slumber, and one is reminded of his warning in "Self-Reliance" that when a man "claims to know and speak of God and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old moldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not."

As Emerson perhaps felt relieved after having completed his lecture on Sweden-

borg, he surely must have anticipated with great pleasure his next on the skeptic Montaigne. He confesses to having had a love for the *Essays* since he was a young man. "It seemed to me," he says, "as if I had written the book, in some former life, so sincerely it spoke to my thought and experience." He is not repelled by Montaigne's grossness, his frank intimacy about himself, because the Frenchman is scrupulously honest in his confessions. As Emerson had found Swedenborg disagreeably wise and therefore repellent, he is in contrast drawn to Montaigne whose motto *Que sçais je?* was a constant reminder to the essayist to stick to the things he did know: such as his farm, his family, himself, and his likes and dislikes in food and friends. Emerson is charmed by Montaigne's conversational style, his calm balance, and his stout solidity. The skeptic is not the impassioned patriot, the dogmatic adherent of creed or party. He is wary of an excess of belief, but he turns also from an excess of unbelief. He is content to say there are doubts. Yet for Emerson, when he turns from Montaigne the man to the skeptic in general whom he represents, the doubter is at base a man of belief. He believes in the moral design of the universe and that "it exists hospitably for the weal of souls." Thus, concludes Emerson, skepticism is finally dissolved in the moral sentiment which remains forever supreme. The skepticism is on the surface only; it questions specifics, but the skeptic can serenely view man's high ambitions defeated and the unequal distribution of power in the world because he believes that deity and moral law control the universe. Emerson himself was at bottom such a believer, though he had passed through his skeptical stage in life to arrive at his belief.

The discussion of Shakespeare as the representative poet begins with the comment that "Great men are more distinguished by range and extent than by originality." Shakespeare, like his fellow dramatists, used a mass of old plays to ex-

periment with. Building upon popular traditions, he was free to use his wide-ranging fancy and his imagination. Borrowing in all directions, he used what he borrowed with such art that it became his.

Emerson touches upon the mystery of Shakespeare's biography, mentioning the paucity of clear facts (only a few more are known today than when Emerson wrote), and then concluding, as have many of Shakespeare's readers, that his plays and his poetry give all the information which is really needed. In the sonnets we find the lore of friendship and of love. Through the characters of his plays we know the man because there is something of him in all of them.

The dramatic skill of Shakespeare is to Emerson less important than his poetry and philosophy and the broad expanse of his book of life, which pictured the men and women of his day and prefigured those of later ages. Shakespeare was inconceivably wise and made his characters as real as if they had lived in his home. His power to convert truth into music and verse makes him the exemplary poet. His music charms the ear while his sentence takes the mind. In his lines experience has been transformed into verse without a trace of egotism. One more royal trait of the poet Emerson finds in Shakespeare: his very name suggests joy and emancipation to men's hearts. To Emerson, Shakespeare was master of the revels to mankind. It is this fact that Emerson regrets: the world's greatest poet used his genius for public amusement. As the poet was half-man in his role as entertainer, so the priests of old and of later days were half-men who took the joy and beauty out of life while they moralized and warned of the doom to come. Only in some future time, says Emerson, will there arise a poet-priest who may see, speak, and act with equal inspiration.

A frequently quoted remark of Emerson's is that he liked people who could *do* things. His expansive praise of Napoleon

in the opening pages of his portrayal of the Corsican as the representative man of the world is based upon his belief that Napoleon could and did do what masses of other men merely wanted to. Napoleon was idolized by common men because he was an uncommonly gifted common man. He succeeded through the virtues of punctuality, personal attention, courage, and thoroughness, qualities which other men possess in lesser degrees. Emerson writes of Napoleon's reliance on his own sense and of his scorn of others' sense. To him Napoleon is the agent or attorney of the middle class, with both the virtues and the vices of the people he represented. He was dishonest, stagy, unscrupulous, selfish, perfidious, and coarse. He was a cheat, a gossip, and when divested of his power and splendor he is seen to be an impostor and a rogue.

Emerson finds Napoleon the supreme democrat who illustrates in his career the three stages of the party: the democrat in youth, the conservative in later life, and the aristocrat at the end: a democrat ripe and gone to seed. Napoleon conducted an experiment in the use of the intellect without conscience. But the experiment failed because the French saw that they could not enjoy what Napoleon had gained for them. His colossal egotism drove him to more attempts at conquest, and so his followers deserted him. Yet Emerson asserts that it was not Napoleon's fault. He was defeated by the eternal law of man and of the world. Here, as before, Emerson sees the moral order in the universe. "Every experiment," he says, "by multitudes or by individuals, that has a selfish aim, will fail. . . . Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men."

Having considered Napoleon as a man of action who failed after having achieved enormous successes, Emerson turns to Goethe as the representative scholar or writer, a man whose intellect moved in many directions and whose writings brought him fame as the greatest

of German authors. Emerson calls him the soul of his century, one who clothed modern existence with poetry. Emerson, a lover of nature himself, remarks that Goethe said the best things about nature that ever were said.

Realizing the impossibility of analyzing the full range of Goethe's writings, Emerson chooses *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* for rather brief comment. He describes it as provoking but also unsatisfactory, but though he has considerable praise for this novel in which a democrat becomes an aristocrat, we do not really learn much about it. In fact, one feels that Emerson was struggling with a difficult subject in dealing with Goethe.

One comment is worthy of noting, however, since it seems a reference to Emerson himself when he says that Goethe is "fragmentary; a writer of occasional poems and of an encyclopedia of sentences."

Among Emerson's works, *Representative Men* has received modest praise, and such chapters as those on Montaigne and Shakespeare have occasionally been reprinted. One of the aptest statements ever made about Emerson's book is that of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes in his *Memoir*: "[Emerson] shows his own affinities and repulsions, and . . . writes his own biography, no matter about whom or what he is talking."

REQUIEM FOR A NUN

Type of work: Novel-play

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: 1938

Locale: Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi

First published: 1950

Principal characters:

TEMPLE DRAKE STEVENS, in her late twenties

NANCY MANNIGOE, about thirty, a Negro, condemned to die for murder

GOWAN STEVENS, Temple's husband

GAVIN STEVENS, a lawyer, Gowan's first cousin

THE GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI

POPEYE (VITELLI), a psychopathic gangster, now dead

ALABAMA RED, Temple's lover eight years before

PETE, Red's brother, Temple's recent lover

Requiem for a Nun takes up the story of *Sanctuary* eight years after Temple Drake's "imprisonment" in a Memphis house of prostitution. The epic depiction of the past as an act of community self-discovery and the individual's anguished scrutiny of his personal history, in the context of the communal past, as an act of self-knowledge are central themes in Faulkner's work. The obvious structure of this book graphically illustrates the dynamic interaction of these themes: in the long prose introductions to each of the three acts, Faulkner, as omniscient storyteller, gives us the entire history of Yoknapatawpha County, using the method of

scene and panorama. Against our understanding of the community's past, Temple Drake, in the drama sections, acts out the climax of her personal story. Many of the major characters in Faulkner's works figure in the prose sections; their individual dramas are presented in other novels and stories.

In the prose sections, Temple's story is not mentioned, though it is symbolically predetermined; in the play sections, the town's history is not mentioned, though the configuration of Temple's drama is symbolic of the communal experience. The scenes in Temple's house (itself steeped in history) occur in the context

of public institutions: courthouse, capitol building, jail. Thus, in the structure and in other aspects of the book as well, Faulkner uses the method of juxtaposition. His consistent use of repetition and of very long, complex, now contorted, now eloquent sentences and paragraphs in the prose sections and in Temple's speeches about her past suggests the labyrinthine course of a journey into the enigmatic past, with its elements of tragedy, folksy, hyperbolic humor, and banality.

Faulkner transcends certain conventions of the dramatic form. The playwright must provide a scene description. Shakespeare does this in one line, Faulkner in twenty-six pages; but the importance of setting in Faulkner was never more dramatically illustrated. In bad plays, the lighting of cigarettes and the making of drinks are action-clichés, but in this book such activity suggests the triviality of present physical action in contrast to the heroic action of the past and to Temple's spiritual anguish. There is more action and a sense of pace in Faulkner's use of rhetoric in the prose sections than there is theatrical action and pace in the play sections. The community history is presented in metaphors derived from the drama; for instance, Faulkner explicitly presents the courthouse, then the capitol, then the jail as stages for the drama of the past and the consequent drama of the present. The lack of symmetry in the relation of the book's parts, in terms of length, is deliberate: just as the account of the county's history is speeded up the nearer it approaches the present, Temple's story is ended quickly after her disclosure of her past; the last act of the play is twelve pages short. Faulkner forces the reader to attend to those incongruities of form, expecting a more profound understanding of content.

In Act I, "The Courthouse (A Name for the City)," Faulkner relates the history of the settlers, the creation of Jefferson simultaneously with the building of

the courthouse and the jail, the origin of which is comic, though its history is heroic. In this courthouse, in the fall of 1938, Nancy Mannigoe, town drunk, occasional prostitute, and dope fiend, is sentenced to hang in March for smothering Temple's six-month-old baby. As the courthouse is symbolic of the settlers' aspirations, Temple's actual sin is symbolic of the community's decline; and as the dispossession of the Indian and the enslavement of the Negro are related in the prose, the present situation of the Negro is dramatized in Nancy's predicament. In jail, years before, she had tried to hang herself in order to leave the white man's world, in which the Negro does the dirty work (this incident is related in "That Evening Sun"); now she is to be hanged for trying to save Temple's baby from a world made unfit for the innocent by Temple's sin.

In "The Golden Dome (Beginning Was the Word)," Faulkner tells of the creation of the state capitol, named after Andrew Jackson; in the Governor's office Temple tells her personal story. Nancy's lawyer, county attorney Gavin Stevens, takes Temple to the Governor on the pretext that her testimony may save Nancy. But to Gavin, death is not the problem; legally, Nancy is already dead, for he knows the Governor will not save her; thus, the law is satisfied, but truth and love are not, and therein lies the injustice.

Nancy's soul is alive; Temple's is dead. Gavin wants to save Temple's soul by persuading her to tell the truth, to undergo the purification of suffering-by-confession that must precede redemption. Other Faulkner characters suffer through telling, but Temple is the major character in his work who confesses to her fellow man. Stevens arranges for Gowan, Temple's husband, to hear that part of her story which he does not yet know—her recent affair with Pete, the brother of Red, Temple's lover in Memphis eight years before. Thus, Temple Drake, daughter of a judge, descendant of fa-

mous statesmen and soldiers, returns to Jackson, her home town, to accuse, try, judge, and condemn herself. Her mission to save Nancy may end in her own salvation.

The flow of Faulkner's story of the past contrasts with Temple's shuddering struggle, without the benediction of tears, to tell her own story. We witness the validity of Stevens' claim that there is no immunity from the past because it is actual in the present. With both the absence and the assertion of human will, man's history moves through a chaotic complex of accident, chance, and design. Thus, in the past, the community set a pattern for the future, which one can perceive only by experiencing it. For instance, male vanity and chastity are two cornerstones of the Southern social structure, built on bought land and a slave economy. Jefferson came into being and got its name because of the vanity of a pint-sized mail rider named Thomas Jefferson Pettigrew; the settlers bribed his complicity in a group act of deception by naming the town after him, though, ironically, he himself was named after Jefferson. It was vanity that compelled Gowan to marry Temple. As a contrast to Temple and Gowan, Faulkner tells the romantic story of a brave Civil War soldier and the virginal daughter of the county jailer. The minor indiscretions of a "foolish virgin" (Temple) and a drunken coward (Gowan) set in motion the further development of a pattern started in the past, the final act of which is Nancy's smothering the baby to save it from suffering and to show Temple the consequences of her sins. Temple's declaration that she places her love for the black-mailer Pete above love for her baby prompts Nancy's act. The personal catastrophes of the present emerge out of the antics and nightmares of history. The book is a reconstruction of this web of accident and design, which the reader alone, by listening to Faulkner, suffering with Temple, and evaluating with Stevens, is able fully to grasp.

In "The Jail (Not Even Yet Quite Relinquish—)," Faulkner brings the story of the county up to the present; the jail is the artifact that "witnesses" the town's swift and dubious progress. In the bullpen of the jail (the stink of which is the stink of Temple's sin that overwhelms her), Temple's personal story, and thus the community's history, reaches a climax in Temple's confrontation with Nancy, on the eve of the execution, to occur in the jail itself.

It is characteristic of Faulkner's use of Christian symbolism that the relation between the titles *Sanctuary* (Temple's "sanctuary" in a sporting house) and *Requiem for a Nun* (Nancy, a prostitute as a nun) is paradoxical and ironic. Nancy, who once held the Stevens family together as nurse, catalyst, confidante, and magnetic center, resembles other of Faulkner's Negro women; but she has "endured" only to be hanged, "crucified" for Temple's sins. The death of this mortal Christ forces Temple to atone all the more deeply herself. Temple, as Mrs. Gowan Stevens, says in Act I, Scene One, that Temple Drake is dead; on the eve of Nancy's execution, Temple Drake truly dies in an act of painful self-recognition; Faulkner suggests that Nancy's goodness may be resurrected in Temple Stevens.

Having suffered the telling, Temple must ask Nancy's forgiveness. She wonders why Nancy and others must suffer because she decided to sneak off to a ball game with Gowan eight years earlier. Stevens' answer is that good can, and must, come out of evil. Even if there were no God, evil would corrupt, as putrefaction taints. Temple knows now that one need only refuse to look on evil, for she thrilled to the evil of the impotent, perverted, murdering gangster, Popeye, who enjoyed watching her make love to his bodyguard, Red. Perhaps man must sin, then suffer, and thus make salvation possible. Nancy rejects hope, because in hoping to be free of the circumstances which make salvation possible, one may

defer or miss it. She is certain she will go to Heaven; for just as she loved the baby she killed, God loves her, though He makes her suffer. In emulation of Nancy, Temple wants to experience the grace of Christ, but she fears that after suffering

there may be no God to forgive her. Nancy's exhortation is trust Jesus and believe. Faulkner leaves to the accidents and patterns of history the answer to the question of Temple's, and the South's, salvation.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NOVELIST

Type of work: Literary essays
Author: Frank Norris (1870-1902)
First published: 1903

Frank Norris' one volume of criticism is sometimes referred to but little quoted. If we wonder how one can ignore a volume titled *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*, written by a novelist of critical standing and published immediately after his early death, at a time when only Henry James among practicing writers seemed to be interested in considering the art of the novel and the novelist, the answer is quickly apparent in Norris' volume. Most of the twenty-five articles (scarcely essays) are written on popular and topical subjects—"Why Women Should Write the Best Novels," "A Plea for Romantic Fiction"—in a regular length of approximately eighteen hundred words with plenty of free generalization and attacks on popular rivals, all in the inflated windy style of the penny-a-liner. In all this successful literary journalism, however, there are passages which deserve to be better known for the light they shed on the American novel then and now, and on Frank Norris.

In the last four years of his short life Frank Norris turned from roving journalism and short stories and began to publish novels; in his last two years the articles he published were almost all on literature, some in regular series, others as he could place them, generally in *World's Work* and *The Critic*, and at least fourteen of these appear in the first fifteen essays in the volume. Eight others had been posthumously published in periodicals. The remaining eleven essays were drawn from earlier work and material syndicated after

Norris' death on October 25, 1902. All come from Norris' sudden interest in his art.

Norris had no voice in the selection or organization of the contents but the restricting of the volume only to fiction is indicated in the opening essay, and the fact that more than half the titles use the words "novel," "novelist," or "fiction," though within the essays Norris uses the larger term "writer."

Six of the better essays were selected for reprinting in 1949 by a New York publisher, making a slim pamphlet of thirty-five pages and forming a basis for considering the volume as a whole. The title essay begins by asserting that the novel is popular today because it is the best expression of modern life and more potent than press or pulpit; therefore the "popular" novelist (not Norris) who sells one hundred and fifty thousand copies of a novel has a responsibility to be as earnest about his work as Norris intends to be. His carping at popular writers continues in other essays, but his program of reform is not aesthetic; all he wants (as would be obvious from his own work) is truth to the facts of life. This is repeated in his conclusion to the second essay, "The True Reward of the Novelist," where he attacks popular historical novelists for their accumulation of historical paraphernalia without trying to understand their characters; it would be better for their soul's sake if they lived among real people and told the truth. This stress on the morality of realism is seen in a

number of other essays, as in "The Need of a Literary Conscience" and the extended final essay, "Salt and Sincerity." This belief is the first article in Norris' credo as a novelist.

In the third essay, "The Novel with a 'Purpose,'" Norris tries to come to grips with the novel as a literary form. The novel is classified as it performs three functions: telling, showing, and proving; the second class simply selects from the stream of events in the first in order to draw character. *The Three Musketeers* tells what happens, but *Romola* shows the character involved in the events of the novel. The third and superior class studies social forces and argues a case corresponding to the novelist's views on Man, as in *Les Misérables*. Norris contends that the last is the most difficult to write because the novelist has first to establish his social views, then submerge them as a storyteller while remaining impersonal to the violent emotions such a novel will arouse in its reader. Mrs. Stowe, it is argued, was absorbed in the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, not in its message, and she cared more for her story than all the suffering slaves that ever were. Here Norris' free generalization has taken over what might have been a valid critical distinction and lands him in the awkward posture of claiming that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is superior (Class III) to *Romola* (Class II). Any complaints against the novel with a "purpose" show the reader will not face truth when the novelist has accepted the responsibility of telling it; for his own good he must read such novels, which join press and pulpit as agencies for the reformation of society.

Norris' crude theory of realism is expanded in the remaining essays of those selected for republication in 1949 and in the remainder of *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*, but it falls to pieces the more Norris considers it, chiefly on the twin rocks of romance and story. The latter, in "Story-Tellers vs. Novelists," is exalted over the novel proper which is

considered "intellectual"—*Romola* is again instanced—because every adult was once a child storyteller. The novelist's "responsibility" has been strangely stretched to include entertaining his public by popularizing his work, which leads to the pronouncement in "The American Public and 'Popular' Fiction" that it is better to have bad books than none at all. Similarly, the sixth and seventh essays prescribe the subjects for the storytelling novelist: the romance of the West ("A Neglected Epic") and the romance of world trade, the frontier of American capitalism—lusty, brawling, savage combat in the name of improving the material conditions of the common man. This view may be very American: it certainly is applicable to Norris' novels, which can now be seen as gripping stories about the romance of rails and wheat. Their realism may result from Norris' special vision but may equally be incidental, leading to the conclusion that Norris was himself a popular historical novelist *manqué*.

Such a conclusion, drawn from among the first ten essays in *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*, is borne out by scattered articles on the American novel present and future in the remainder of the volume. They tell us about Norris and about middle-brow conceptions of the nature and function of fiction at the turn of the century, and incidentally they show why Henry James had to wait some time for his public. Norris was trying to define his own responsibility as a novelist, and not succeeding because he was following a minority trend of protest which stemmed from the West, his own place of origin. Ironically, it is his attempt to deny his romantic proclivities and write social protest novels which alone entitles him to serious consideration today. He did achieve a new definition of "romantic" in "A Problem in Fiction," his best attempt to distinguish between realism (flat accuracy) and romanticism (inner truth), which in turn hints that fiction, being fiction, will always be both inaccurate and romantic.

The essays in the second half of *Responsibilities* discuss the mechanics of writing and selling which Norris had discovered in twelve years of enterprising journalism. "Fiction Writing as a Business" shows how to sell one novel seven times in succession: the Sunday paper serial, the hardback, the Canadian edition, the cheap cloth edition, the paperback, the English edition, and the English "colonial" edition. Because the novelist's production is estimated at two books yearly, he is advised to go in for "short stuff," articles and short stories. Data like this, figured out in dollars and print orders, must have been hard to come by in Norris' time; many amateurs needed "The Volunteer Manuscript," one of the liveliest of the essays, which begins with a calculation that if those Americans who have lost the use of both arms are discounted, there remain approximately 69,900,000 who persist in writing novels and "volunteering" them to publishers. Norris gives them seventeen sound rules for submitting manuscripts, beginning with the advice to have them typewritten and ending with a recommendation to

stop writing novels.

There are other practical essays in this half of the volume which reveal the conditions of American publishing at that time—"New York as Literary Centre," "Retail Bookseller: Literary Dictator"—but three of the essays form a separate group which is, given their time and place, surprising. In "Novelists to Order—While you Wait," Norris proposes that novelists should be able to get professional training as sound as that of painters or sculptors. In two additional essays he offers suggestions for that training, suggestions on matters that have been incorporated into composition courses today. By emphasizing stylistic criteria he seems to anticipate the New Criticism; "Simplicity in Art" analyzes a passage from The Gospel of St. Luke as its criterion. "The Mechanics of Fiction" directs the reader's attention to the technique of exposition in the novel. Norris' unconscious anticipation of developments, such as the creative writing course, makes us regret greatly that he had only begun to define his craft in *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*.

THE RETURN OF THE KING

Type of work: Novel

Author: J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-)

Type of plot: Epic romance

Time of plot: The Third Age in a remote legendary past

Locale: The Middle-Earth, chiefly Gondor, Mordor, and the Shire

First published: 1955

Principal characters:

FRODO BAGGINS, the Ring-bearer

SAMWISE GAMGEE (SAM), his loyal servant, temporary Ring-bearer

MERIADOC BRANDYBUCK (MERRY) and

PEREGRIN TOOK (PIPPIN), Frodo's cousins, chief scourers of the Shire

GANDALF (MITHRANDIR), a wizard, the White Rider

ARAGORN (ELESSAR), the returned king

ÉOMER, the nephew of King Théoden and his successor as King of Rohan

ÉOWYN, Éomer's sister, a beautiful shield-maiden

DENETHOR, Steward of Gondor, the father of Boromir and Faramir

FARAMIR, since his brother's death the hope of Gondor

GOLLUM, a corrupted hobbit, once owner of the Ring

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Critique:

The concluding volume of *The Lord of the Rings* brings to fruition the choices and labors of the opposing forces of good and evil, whose struggle is narrated in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and the present work. Like a symphony the book reaches its climax and subsides into a quiet coda, mingling profound joy and sadness. After depicting many adventures, it returns to the Shire, where the first volume began; but the Shire and its inhabitants are much changed from what they were at the beginning. As in the other volumes, the author shows his mastery of narrative and his poetic power. No brief summary can cover all the incidents or name all the memorable characters in the book; nor can a mere retelling of the story do more than hint at its depths. When Tolkien speaks of the song of the minstrel after the overthrow of Sauron, he, perhaps unwittingly, characterizes his own work, for the singer led his hearers into the regions where joy and sorrow coalesce. The book looms like a survivor from some ancient age but speaks wisely and pertinently to the present. The appendices to *The Return of the King* include chronologies of the First, Second, and Third Ages, family trees, legendary histories of the peoples appearing in *The Lord of the Rings*, and keys to pronunciation of names and to the languages, including the elven tongue. Although not necessary to the understanding of the book, the appendices are a playground for the linguist and teller of tales, and they furnish delight to readers with similar tastes.

The Story:

Gandalf and Pippin rode on Shadowfax to the Realm of Gondor and were admitted to the presence of Denethor, Steward of Gondor. Pippin told of the heroic death of Boromir, Denethor's son,

and swore allegiance to the kingly old man. Gandalf did not hinder this, though Pippin sensed tension between the two. Beregon of the Guard gave the hobbit the passwords and told him how Gondor, closest of free lands to Mordor, bore the brunt of the Dark Lord's wrath.

After the departure of Gandalf, Théoden and his Riders, with Aragorn, Merry, Legolas, and Gimli, rode back to Dunharrow. They were joined by Rangers, Aragorn's kindred. Aragorn, sorely troubled, said haste demanded that he travel the Paths of the Dead. He had wrestled with the will of Sauron in his seeing stone, hoping to distract Sauron so that Frodo and Sam might fulfill their mission of destroying Sauron's Ring. Théoden's niece Éowyn begged Aragorn not to take the Paths of the Dead, from which none had returned, or to take her with him. He refused. Leading his company underground, he summoned the ghosts of oathbreakers who had failed to fight Sauron and who could have no peace until they kept the oath sworn to Aragorn's ancestor. They followed him, and wherever they passed they spread terror.

Théoden and his nephew Éomer summoned the Riders of Rohan to answer Gondor's call for aid. Éowyn and Merry were denied a place among the combatants. When the Riders left, a young warrior, Dernhelm, smuggled Merry under a cloak. The darkness which Sauron sent out to dismay his enemies concealed the movements of Rohan's Riders.

When Faramir, the younger son of Denethor, came back from his outpost and reported his meeting with Frodo, Denethor was coldly furious that he had not taken the Ring by force. Boromir, he said, would have brought it to his father. Gandalf replied that if Boromir had taken it, he would have fallen and re-

placed the Dark Lord only by becoming another Dark Lord, whom even his father would not have known.

Sauron's army, led by Angmar, chief of the Ringwraiths, attacked Gondor. Faramir returned to battle, but was wounded by Ringwraiths. Despair seized Denethor, who decided to burn himself and the unconscious but still living Faramir. Pippin sought Gandalf to prevent this mad act. The hosts of Mordor battered down the gate, and the chief Ringwraith entered, confronted only by Gandalf. Horn blasts announced the arrival of Rohan, and Angmar vanished to return on his reptilian flying mount. Théoden's horse went mad with fright and fell on his master. Merry crawled, sick with fear, behind the monster, but Dernhelm faced the Ringwraith. According to an old prophecy, no living man could destroy Angmar; but Dernhelm was discovered to be Éowyn, not a man. She decapitated his monstrous steed. Merry thrust from behind with his blade of Westernesse, and Éowyn struck at Angmar's head. Both were stunned; but Angmar's empty cloak and armor collapsed on the ground, and a shrill wail ran down the wind. Aragorn arrived in ships with reinforcements. The battle was won, but the cost was great. Denethor, thwarted by Beregon and Gandalf in his attempt to burn Faramir, burned himself, clutching his seeing stone through which the will of Sauron had entered Gondor. At Théoden's death Éomer became King of Rohan. In the Houses of Healing, Aragorn treated Faramir, Éowyn, and Merry. Gandalf, Aragorn, and others marched to the Black Gate of Mordor to distract Sauron yet again and keep his Eye from Frodo. At the Gate Mordor's hordes attacked them.

Meanwhile, Sam had made his way into Mordor to try to rescue Frodo. The orcs had fought over Frodo's mithril coat, and most of them were dead. Sam killed the lone guard and disguised Frodo and himself with orc armor. Nightmare days

followed as they struggled across the ashen land toward Mount Doom, often escaping capture by seeming miracles, once being taken for orcs and forced to join them until they escaped by a fortunate accident. As Sam carried the exhausted Frodo on his back, struggling toward Mount Doom and its restless fires, Gollum, who had been trailing them, leaped from a high rock, knocking Sam down, and grappled with Frodo for the Ring. Frodo flung him off and announced that if Gollum ever touched him again he would be cast into the fire. Frodo moved on. Sam raised Sting to kill Gollum but could not strike the wretched, repulsive creature. Gollum fled. Sam followed Frodo into the fissure in the side of Mount Doom. There, beside the Crack of Doom with its fearful flames, Frodo put on the Ring, and Sauron became aware of him. The Dark Lord called his Ringwraiths from the battle. Gollum dashed past Sam, grasped the Ring, and fell into the fire. The volcano erupted; the towers of Mordor disintegrated; the Ringwraiths flew into the flames and were destroyed. The hosts of Mordor scattered like dust. The Captains of the West saw a pall of smoke rise above Mordor, lean threateningly toward them, and then blow away. Gandalf and three great Eagles picked up Frodo and Sam, where they lay on an island of stone slowly being covered by molten lava, and brought them back for Aragorn's healing.

They were present at the crowning of Aragorn as King Elessar. Frodo took the crown from Faramir, the Steward of Gondor, and bore it to Gandalf, who crowned the king. Celeborn and Galadriel came, and Elrond with his two sons brought his daughter Arwen Evenstar to marry Aragorn and become queen. Éomer, King of Rohan, then took Théoden's body back to his country. He gave the hand of his sister Éowyn to Faramir, whom she had grown to love in the Houses of Healing. The guests scat-

tered, Legolas and Gimli to visit Fangor, Celeborn and Galadriel to Lothlórien, Gandalf and the hobbits to Rivendell to visit Bilbo. Gandalf sent the four hobbits to the Shire after telling them they would find evil, which they could now remedy without help from him. Lotho Sackville-Baggins had set up a dictatorship; back of him was a mysterious Sharkey. Merry and Pippin took charge of scouring the Shire with the help of other hobbits who had needed only a leader. They killed or drove away the Boss's ruffians and learned that Sharkey was Saruman, whom Treebeard had released after Sauron's overthrow. Saruman tried to stab Frodo, but the mithril coat saved

him again. Saruman and his henchman Wormtongue, who had murdered Lotho, were banished. Wormtongue hated Saruman and cut his throat. The wizard's body shriveled with rapid decay. Hobbits killed the fleeing Wormtongue.

Sam brought beauty back to the Shire, sprinkling over it the dust given him in Lothlórien by Galadriel. He married Rosie Cotton, and they lived in Bag End, looking after Frodo. Annually Frodo's wounds troubled his body and his spirit, until he joined Gandalf, Bilbo, Galadriel, and Elrond and sailed away to the overseas haven of the elves. Thus the Third Age ended.

RHINOCEROS

Type of work: Drama

Author: Eugène Ionesco (1912-)

Time: The present

Locale: A small provincial town in France

First presented: 1959

Principal characters:

BERENGER, the unheroic hero; unkempt and apathetic

JEAN, his friend, fastidious and self-confident

DAISY, Berenger's girl friend, a secretary at the office where he works

THE WAITRESS

THE GROCER

THE GROCER'S WIFE

THE OLD GENTLEMAN

THE LOGICIAN

THE HOUSEWIFE

THE CAFÉ PROPRIETOR

MR. PAPILLON, Berenger's boss

DUDARD and

BOTARD, fellow employees of Berenger

MRS. BOEUF, the wife of another employee

A FIREMAN

THE LITTLE OLD MAN

THE LITTLE OLD MAN'S WIFE

By general agreement, a number of contemporary playwrights—including, among others, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, and Jean Genet, as well as Eugène Ionesco—have been characterized as writers for the Theater of the Absurd. Strongly influenced by existentialist thought, such writers accept, as their fundamental as-

sumption, the proposition that life is an absurdity. The human condition is to them ridiculous because it is totally irrational and unintelligible. They see the individual as existing in a state of complete isolation, unable to locate or to establish order in a chaotic world, meaning in a senseless one. There is no order,

no meaning, because there are no absolutes: no permanent values, no irrevocable beliefs.

To project this bleak view of the universe, the writers for the Theater of the Absurd have smashed all the conventions of the familiar naturalistic dreams. The familiar stage is the scene of an action which, though it may be starkly tragic or broadly comic, is assumed to have meaning. It depicts an action capable of being understood. But such a stage, the new playwrights contend, is utterly false; it attempts to impose order on life, which is without meaning. Therefore they have, to a great extent, dispensed with plot. Plot gives a sense of getting somewhere, assumes that man is capable of getting somewhere and that there is in fact somewhere worth getting to.

Rhinoceros has more of a plot in the sense of a significant action than do, for example, Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* or Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Nonetheless *Rhinoceros* is far less a play about an action than it is a play about a situation: the situation being that, namely, of the human condition. And that condition is presented, of course, as being absurd.

The unsuspecting reader or viewer, however, does not immediately realize that Ionesco is out to explode the familiar dramatic conventions. Ionesco begins by using these conventions; then gradually he demolishes them. Much of the first act sounds like any of a dozen boulevard comedies—amusing, but eminently forgettable. The scene is a square in a small provincial town. Jean and Berenger converse across a table at a sidewalk café. Jean berates his unshaven friend for drinking too much. Berenger complains that his life is still unsettled. Jean, who proceeds to lecture him about Duty, tells him that he must get used to life as it is.

Then everything is interrupted, including the viewer's sense that he is on familiar territory, by a rhinoceros, which thunders by just off-stage. The townspeople are astounded and alarmed. Before long another rhinoceros gallops by, or

perhaps it is the same one returning. The civic alarm is noticeably less acute this time.

In the first scene of Act II comes a startling revelation: the rhinoceroses are townspeople who have undergone a strange, and never explained, metamorphosis. By the next day, the number of rhinoceroses is increasing. In the second scene Berenger visits Jean, who, during the course of the scene, turns into a rhinoceros. His voice becomes progressively hoarser and eventually unintelligible. His manner becomes aggressive and hostile towards humans. He makes periodic checks with the bathroom mirror located off-stage, and each time he returns his skin has become greener and a bump on his head has grown visibly larger. During his last visit to the bathroom Jean's transformation is completed and Berenger barely escapes being trampled by slamming the door on his former friend. As Berenger flees the building, rhinoceros heads pop into view in doorways and windows; the lethargic Berenger is precipitated into a state of panic.

In the course of Act III everyone in the town, except Berenger, changes into a rhinoceros, though this transformation takes place off-stage, the scene being Berenger's room. For a time, before he is deserted by his last friend, Dudard, and his fiancée, Daisy, Berenger tries to think of some way to combat a trend which he can see only as ominous. He decides to write to the newspapers, write a manifesto, or go to see the mayor or his assistant if the mayor should be occupied at the time. But his plans, ineffectual to begin with, are forgotten when, at the end, he is alone.

In his long closing soliloquy Berenger first expresses his firm intention to remain a human being, to hold out no matter what; but then he begins to feel the terrible stress of utter isolation. He sees that he is in an intolerable, an absurd, position. He is not sure what language he is speaking. Then, when he makes a choice, he realizes that he can name any lan-

guage because he is the only one able to speak it. He becomes momentarily ashamed of his appearance and of his normal voice; he tries to become a rhinoceros, but he does not know how to affect the change. Then, either because he fails or perhaps because his courage reasserts itself, he declares, at the curtain, that he will put up a stand against these creatures. He is the last man left and he plans to stay that way; he will not give in.

The events of the play, needless to say are absurd; but they have the warped and frightening logic, as well as the immediacy, of a nightmare. They reflect a coherent, a consistently somber, view of an incoherent world. It is not only the situation and the plot (such as it is) of Ionesco's play that can be described as absurd. Dialogue itself is frequently pointless, intentionally meaningless, underscoring the idea that communication is impossible. There is a point in the play where the Grocer's Wife is talking to the Old Gentleman and through their conversation the audience can realize the waste of conversation at times. Daisy comments on these words without meaning, saying that speech itself is absurd. Here, as elsewhere, one of Ionesco's purposes is obviously to parody the inconsequentiality of human discourse, both in life and in many a dreary play.

At other times there are lengthy and pointedly ridiculous arguments about trivial questions. Was there one rhinoceros or were there two? Did it, or they, have one horn or two? Or did one have one horn and the other two? Do African or Asian rhinoceroses have one horn or two horns?

There are even instances in which the audience, lulled nearly to sleep by the flow of banal chatter, suddenly realizes that something very curious is happening. Two conversations have been going on simultaneously, and somehow what is being said on one side of the stage has a bearing in the conversation taking place at the other side. The Logician and the

Old Gentleman are discussing animals with the exercise of logic; Berenger and Jean are talking in contradictions, yet both groups finish their illogical conversations with the word *logic*. Not only are we presented with the patent absurdity of a completely illogical Logician; we are also prodded into questioning the common assumption that people actually communicate. The distinction between the two conversations breaks down; nothing is actually said. The result is a modern Babel. Plot, action, and dialogue—all are manipulated into creating a world which is delightfully daft, and thoroughly unsettling.

In some respects *Rhinoceros* lends itself to comparison with the facts about Ionesco's own life. He once worked for a publisher of law books, and the office in which Berenger works is described as being like a firm of law publications. This parallel, of course, is scarcely worth mentioning, but the suggestion that here is some relationship between Berenger's experiences and Ionesco's is not without a certain validity. In prewar Rumania, Ionesco had seen a seemingly normal populace succumbing to the mass-hysteria of fascism. Could not there be a parallel, in his play, in the rapid and decidedly ominous transformation of provincial townspeople into unthinking beasts?

In the final analysis, however, there is little point in resorting to an autobiographical reading of the play. To what sort of conclusion can it lead? If it leads to an interpretation of *Rhinoceros* as a piece of anti-fascist polemic, then certainly this reading will not do. There is nothing in the play itself to support such a narrow interpretation. It has no such specific "message." Its purpose is simply to project a certain view of life, a way of seeing which thoroughly disapproves of totalitarianism and to man's submission to a life bounded by conformity; a view, however, which sees the normal man, Berenger, unable to perform a significant action, unless it be—and even this is ambiguous—within and merely for himself,

a view which finds its hero in the least heroic of men.

At the end of the play Berenger is representative of modern man, as one of the writers for the Theater of the Absurd sees him; his plight is universal. Berenger is totally isolated, incapable of communication with others, if there are any others. Any notion that language is an adequate means of communication has been exploded. Berenger finds himself without

orientation, unable to locate anything which is permanent and unchanging. And yet there still exists the self, for he maintains an unquenchable identity. This much is left to him as a minimal but undeniable truth. This realization gives small comfort, but the only one possible for him or for us, coming as it does from a playwright convinced of the proposition that life is absurd.

RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT

Type of work: Novel

Author: Patrick White (1912-)

Time: After World War II

Locale: Sarsaparilla, an outlying suburb of Sydney, Australia

First published: 1961

Principal characters:

MRS. RUTH GODBOLD, a mother, wife, and washerwoman of good and simple heart

MORDECAI HIMMELFARB, an ex-professor of English and Jewish immigrant

MISS MARY HARE, an elderly spinster, the owner of Xanadu

ALF DUBBO, an aborigine painter

HARRY ROSETREE (born HAIM ROSENBAUM), a factory owner

MRS. JOLLEY, the gossiping, malicious widowed housekeeper at Xanadu

MRS. FLACK, her friend, also a woman of genteel malevolence

BLUE, Mrs. Flack's illegitimate son

Patrick White's novel, named from the four cherubim and the four wheels in the first chapter of the vision of Ezekiel, contains four almost equally important principal characters; hence it is in one way four novels in one, a fact which probably accounts for its length. But these four characters are deliberately entwined to represent four aspects of the main theme, giving the novel complexity as well as mass and in turn providing its energy. The theme is presented in apocalyptic terms, a vision after the manner of Ezekiel and Blake.

Although the novel is central to White's work as a whole and highly relevant to Australian literature and to the contemporary novel, the more important considerations here are those of structure and meaning.

The seventeen chapters of the novel

are organized in seven unequal parts to describe the events in and near the Australian town of Sarsaparilla, which White has fixed on as his recurrent locale. The novel occupies itself with the last few weeks in the lives of three of the protagonists: Alf Dubbo, a consumptive and diseased aborigine painter; Miss Mary Hare, an aging spinster of good family; Mordecai Himmelfarb, an elderly Jewish immigrant or "New" Australian working in a factory. The two latter die on Good Friday; Dubbo dies later. At the end of the novel Mrs. Ruth Godbold, the fourth protagonist and a local washerwoman, remains with her children and grandchildren to bury Himmelfarb and watch the destruction of Xanadu, Miss Hare's dilapidated mansion.

The first and second parts of the novel tell the past histories of Miss Hare and

Himmelfarb; the fourth and fifth parts tell the stories of Mrs. Godbold and Alf Dubbo in less detail and at shorter length, a modification caused by the increasing pace of the plot in the later sections. The plot is launched in the first scene when Miss Hare's allowance from an English cousin, resumed after World War II, enables her to hire a housekeeper for Xanadu. She hires Mrs. Jolley, a widow rejected by her family as the probable murderess of her husband; Miss Hare soon learns to fear her ordinariness and her spite. Three aspects of Miss Hare's past are important: she is the only, ugly, and unwanted daughter of English parents whose delusions of grandeur are reflected in the name of their house—Xanadu; she has been nursed back to life by Mrs. Godbold; she has seen the "Chariot" and is henceforth marked as a "rider," as she believes Mrs. Godbold is also. By the end of the first part she has also met fleetingly the two other riders, Dubbo and Himmelfarb, and Mrs. Jolley has met her peer in gossip and evil, Mrs. Flack. Thus the plot, protagonists, and theme are all introduced by the end of the first part.

As Miss Hare, perhaps inexplicably, told her story to Mrs. Jolley in the first part, so Himmelfarb tells his to Miss Hare when they meet by chance in the overgrown grounds of Xanadu. Himmelfarb's prewar career as a professor of English in Germany has resulted in the loss of his Jewish faith, a betrayal compounded by the cowardice which gave his wife to the Nazis. Himmelfarb is sheltered for a time by old friends, but when they too are taken by the Nazis he gives himself up as a Jew and tries ineffectually to help his people while on the train to the gas chambers. Although he fails, he is miraculously delivered from the extermination camp, and, half-blinded by the symbolic loss of his glasses, makes his way to Israel with aid given by many helping hands. Later he rejects this haven and accepts emigration to Australia. There he works

in the factory of a Jew turned gentile, Mr. Rosetree, buys a dilapidated shack, and becomes thoroughly orthodox.

Himmelfarb's story is possibly the most remarkable of the four past histories which make up the bulk of the book, though each is a triumph of White's imagination and narrative skill. His technical problem is to relate thematically the four by more than coincidental meetings in and around Sarsaparilla. As the plot advances through the parallel sub-histories of the Rosetrees and of Mrs. Jolley and Mrs. Flack, so the theme is gradually explicated and illustrated. All protagonists are burnt by different aspects of love. Himmelfarb rejects it; Miss Hare's affection for her parents is stunted, Dubbo's encounters with love all turn to perversion and lust; only Mrs. Godbold, finally apostrophized as "the rock of love," can fully express and enjoy it, even for her most unattractive (and very Australian) husband who loads her with six daughters and leaves her to bring them up by taking in Sarsaparilla's washing.

By the end of the fifth part the formal arrangement of the quartet of protagonists is taking shape in at least three aspects: sex, marital state, and native or "New" Australian. Miss Hare is unmarried and born in Australia; Dubbo represents the aborigines or older Australians; Mrs. Godbold and Himmelfarb are or have been married, and both are immigrants, though at different periods of Australian history. White seems to be using as universal a cast as possible, and postwar Australia gives him the opportunity to select representative human types so as to make his novel at once Australian and universal. Of the criteria, the most important to the theme is the experience of love, expressed in terms of marriage. The two most evil figures in the novel are both widows, and the more sinister is Mrs. Flack, whose son, Blue, is introduced as her nephew in the third part. This denial of a loving relationship is contrasted to Mrs. Godbold's nursing of

Miss Hare, Himmelfarb, and Dubbo.

By the beginning of part six all the protagonists have met each other and the "Chariot" link has been established between two pairs, the women and the men, when Himmelfarb finds Dubbo reading Ezekiel at the factory in preparation for a canvas of the "Riders in the Chariot" he is trying to paint. This he can do after watching the death of Himmelfarb attended by Miss Hare and Mrs. Godbold on the Good Friday following his mock crucifixion by Blue at Rosetree's factory on Easter Thursday. Following Himmelfarb's death Miss Hare wanders away and is presumed dead, Dubbo dies of a tubercular hemorrhage, and Rosetree commits suicide when he learns that Himmelfarb has had a Christian burial at the hands of Mrs. Godbold. Mrs. Jolley has nosed out Blue's true parentage but Mrs. Flack knows that Mrs. Jolley's family has rejected her as Blue has been rejected; the two widows live together in a hell of their own making. Only Mrs. Godbold is left with her family to watch brick bungalows gradually spreading over the site of Xanadu. On a visit to the real estate development Mrs. Godbold achieves a perfect vision of the "riders in the chariot."

The complexity of structure in this novel comes from the effort to integrate the past of the four protagonists meaningfully into their present relationship that is casual until the death of Himmelfarb. The plot, through the machinations of Mrs. Flack and Blue, culminates in a fantastic incident—the mock-crucifixion—which has been much criticized. But it is essential to the meaning of the novel, probably best summed up in Mrs. Godbold's cryptic remark that it is the same which sends Rosetree to his suicide, realizing that all his changes of name and religion could not alter anything in his world; in the sight of love all things are equal. It takes a second Messiah and a latter-day Passion to make this point and to manipulate the only meeting of all four protagonists at Himmelfarb's deathbed. These four are not to be taken as the "riders" themselves but as those who have glimpsed the four-square or totally encompassing nature of love. Each represents an aspect of love: Miss Hare loves nature, Dubbo painting, Himmelfarb religion, and Mrs. Godbold humanity. These, says White, are the cardinal points of man's compass, and the greatest of these is charity.

THE RISE OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

Type of work: Economic and social history

Authors: Charles A. Beard (1874-1948) and Mary R. Beard (1876-1958)

Time: Prehistoric times through the Hoover administration

Locale: The United States and the world influenced by it

First published: 1927

Principal personages:

GEORGE WASHINGTON

JOHN ADAMS

THOMAS JEFFERSON

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

ANDREW JACKSON

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

DANIEL WEBSTER

WILLIAM MCKINLEY

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

WOODROW WILSON

HERBERT HOOVER

Here is a brilliant and stimulating survey of the factors composing American civilization from the Indian aborigines to the advent of technocracy, written by a pair of historians who can combine scholarship with a popular presentation, interpret rather than describe, and select the significant moments of half a millennium of existence. It is an epic, not of a hero but of a land and people, a work heroic in the sweep of its conception and its orderly unfolding. Proof of its acceptance by historians of varying schools of thought lies in the fact that the original two-volume edition of 1927, after going through ten reprintings, was revised and enlarged into one volume of 1,717 pages in 1934, followed by many subsequent printings, and sold at a quarter of its original price.

Only the big, clear, and easily read print and the attractive sketches scattered through its pages compensate for the fatigue of holding this three-pound volume. However, having begun the reading of its neatly turned sentences, well chosen quotations, and incisive comments that constantly appear to challenge and illuminate, the user forgets physical discomfort. One reviewer termed it "appallingly learned, stirringly enlightening, and movingly humane." However, the reader quickly forgets to think critically of its presentation in the interest in what is being presented.

In the Introduction to the college edition, the editors promise a departure from the traditional method of tracing American history from Columbus to Hoover. Only roughly does chronology shape its presentation. It has a wide field to cover. American civilization is made up of social aspects as well as political, intellectual, agricultural, and industrial factors. Basically the authors divide their study into the Agricultural and the Industrial eras. But like the Greek Anaximander, they see history as an ocean throwing out new forms and beings that are swallowed and allowed to reappear.

In the first chapter, the Beards

quote many philosophic attitudes toward changes in history. Diverse were the motives of those who came to settle America and establish or change its patterns. Colonizers who wanted to hang onto bits of their homeland and those seeking separation and independence both played their part. Since many of the original settlers were English, the Beards devote the first four chapters to English characteristics and contributions. In this regard, they strike an original note for, unlike many historians, they stress the part played by women. Perhaps Mrs. Beard made it necessary for the index to include eighteen entries for the role of women among pioneers and developers, and their influence appears many more times in tracing the growth of home, education, and religion.

America was no place for slackers or lazy people. From Capt. Smith onward came demands for immigrants not afraid of soiling their hands. And they were rewarded. Workers, say the authors, could make up to \$75,000 a year from tobacco crops in the South. By contrast, the "negardly soil of Massachusetts" was a factor in driving its settlers away to settle Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and points further west.

Another factor in expansion was big families. Cheap land encouraged early marriages. Children became economic assets to work it, and it was a population explosion, rather than a flood of immigrants from Europe, that increased the number of inhabitants. In one of their many interpretive comments, the Beards offer the case of the centenarian, Mary Hazzard of Rhode Island, who, at her death, could count five hundred children, grand children, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. Two hundred and five of them, including one granddaughter who "had been a grandmother nearly fifteen years," attended Mary Hazzard's funeral.

Other labor was performed by semi-servile whites imported under bond for a term of years and by Negroes sold into chattel slavery. The historians estimate

that half the immigrants into America outside of New England before the Revolution were of these two groups.

The attitude of the royal governors was that England's ruling class should benefit from the colonies. Thus, an attempt was made to force the colonists to buy only from England. If there was to be foreign trade, it should be to the eventual profit of the English. Despite this situation, provincial America expanded.

Unable to deal in depth with all periods of growth, the Beards have selected typical and significant moments. From vast stores of facts gathered by a century of researchers, they picture provincial America. They mention the hot rum and rich wines on the tables of both the wealthy planters of the South and the strictest merchants and noblest divines of Boston. They note the equal condemnation in Virginia and Massachusetts of skepticism in religion and of the delights of the flesh. As evidence of the high degree of learning, they cite the sale of one hundred thousand copies of Thomas Paine's pamphlet demanding independence.

Concerning the next period, the Revolution, the Beards grant that many theories exist as to its cause. They try to show the validity and falsity inherent in many of these. But little space is devoted to fighting the war. Believing that by the time a reader takes up this book he will have been guided many times through the stories of its battles and heroes, they cover its main events and many by-products in a single chapter, on their way to a treatment of the problems of the new Republic.

The rise of national political parties preceded the struggle for empire that grew out of agricultural expansion and the need for world markets. This, rather than commercial motives (since America had little manufacturing), was to blame in the eyes of the historians for the War of 1812 against England. The Louisiana Purchase, too, had its inception in the love of the soil. Out of the new territory

came the creation of half a dozen new agricultural states. This gave rise to the formation of the Farmer-Labor political party and the election, in 1828, of a son of the soil, Andrew Jackson, as President of the United States. The disposal of public land became, along with the tariff, his most pressing concern.

The Beards show how the expansion westward toward the Pacific Ocean shifted the balance of power. Not until the Whigs could achieve an effective union with Western farmers in 1860, under the name of Republicans, did they regain power.

Trouble with Mexico, resulting in the acquiring of the vast expanse of Texas, brought the prospect of a number of new commonwealths, each capable of sending to Washington two slave-state senators to balance the newly-arriving free-state senators from Michigan, Iowa, and elsewhere, Calhoun, as the historians point out, seeking to perpetuate the Constitution and save the Union, only reopened the sectional controversy that eventually destroyed chattel bondage.

Chapter XV, "The Politics of the Economic Drift," is a thoughtful study of the steps that divided the Republic into three sections. The capitalists of the Northeast needed a liberal immigrant policy to insure cheap labor. The planters and the farmers joined in opposing the capitalists because they had interests in common. The farmers battled for domestic trade and the Southern planters needed foreign markets. They differed in their attitude toward the tariff that had five times been revised between 1830 and 1860, mostly downward. If the complex economic problems of the fast developing nation can be simplified, the Beards have done it here.

The final chapter of volume one, "Democracy: Romantic and Realistic," is an exercise in nomenclature. Those, like de Tocqueville, who tried to characterize the American development, interpreted it in the light of their own background.

Part II, "The Industrial Era," heralds

the approach of the irrepressible conflict. The authors call that conflict "The Second American Revolution." They object to the term "War of Rebellion" with its stigma of treason against the South. Equally unacceptable to them is "War Between the States," since in some cases it was a guerrilla war within states and in others a split in the state. They lead up to the conflict by showing each side as sure of the justice of its position. The Missouri Compromise, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the Dred Scott decision serve to reinforce their opinion. Actually, say the Beards, it was a social war, resulting in the rearrangement of classes, wealth, and industrial development. In keeping with their broad view of history, hardly a battle is mentioned and none described. Once again the contributions of women and the resulting change in their status are considered.

Following the war, by whatever name it is called, came a rounding out of the continent and the triumph of business enterprise. Unfortunately, the presence in the South of so many freed slaves brought special phases of agriculture, like the "cropping system" and others, all inefficient. Even today, the authors declare, the acre value of Southern farms is less than at the end of the war. Unable to handle machinery, the Negroes moved northward, creating new problems.

Cheap land was gone. With no more frontiers, Americans had to look beyond their borders in search of development. Within the nation, this agricultural revo-

lution made farmers subject to the processes of capitalistic society.

The Gilded Age that followed brought a juxtaposition of wealth and poverty—no new thing, say the authors, citing similar situations from Greece and Rome to England and Mexico City. Out of the increased riches and might came Imperial America and an effort to create a balance of power. The Machine Age came next, and the Beards end their survey with Hoover and the approaching depression.

Besides the maps, a selective bibliography of forty pages that omits obvious sources and fifty columns of index complete this ideal history for the intelligent layman. Some may feel that the attempt to combine the academic with the popular results occasionally in letting literary expression replace profundity of thought. But for most readers, the facts and explanations are so well combined that explanations come to appear as facts. There may be a difference of opinion about some of their conclusions, but that would be inevitable in such a large-scale interpretation of history.

Much of the material has been covered elsewhere, but here it is skillfully combined with new matter in a crisp and interesting style. Because the Beards have been accurate and scholarly in collecting, temperate and judicial in statement, and sensitive to injustice, some reviewers have been led to place this pair of serious historians in the class with Parkman, Motley, and Prescott. At all events, their study is well worth reading.

RODERICK HUDSON

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry James (1843-1916)

Type of plot: Psychological realism

Time of plot: The 1870's

Locale: Chiefly Rome, also Florence and Switzerland

First published: 1876

Principal characters:

RODERICK HUDSON, a young American sculptor

ROWLAND MALLET, a young, wealthy art patron

MRS. LIGHT, a vain and silly widow

CHRISTINA LIGHT, her beautiful daughter
THE CAVALIERE GIACOSA, Christina's father
PRINCE CASAMASSIMA, Christina's husband
SAM SINGLETON, an American painter
MRS. HUDSON, Roderick's insipid mother
MARY GARLAND, Roderick's American fiancée

Critique:

Roderick Hudson, the first novel of Henry James, is significant for two major reasons. First and most important, it is a readable and interesting book in its own right. The main characters are few and vivid, if exasperating. The main action, Roderick's ultimately tragic plunge into life's fullness, is easily followed, and its implications for the other characters are easily assessed.

Second, James here accumulates a great many of the themes, characters, and artistic devices which will appear in his work for three decades to come. The title character, Hudson, is one of the many sensitive artists and writers who populate James's fiction. He is also the impressionable American who discovers himself while in the process of discovering Europe, as do Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer, and Lambert Strether in the better-known novels. Furthermore, the satellite characters include certain typical Jamesian figures: a member of the minor European nobility (Prince Casamassima), highly moralistic Americans (Rowland Mallet, Mrs. Hudson), and an energetic conniver (Mrs. Light).

Here, too, are the unmistakable Jamesian themes: the cultured but decadent Europeans set against the moralistic but naïve Americans, the intelligent young person who undergoes a process of self-discovery, the unpleasant and even tragic nature of the confrontation with reality, the moral dilemmas of an overly sensitive soul.

Artistically, James adopts one of his favorite narrative devices. He puts himself, as the storyteller, inside the consciousness of a single person, Hudson's friend Rowland Mallet. The novel is, then, an account of Rowland's observa-

tions and judgments, while at the same time James keeps Roderick as the main character.

According to his custom, James provides slow and careful development of character, with great attention to nuance of relationship. The reader becomes fascinated, for example, by what appears to be Roderick's callous treatment of his fiancée, and by the tenacious good will of Rowland toward the undeserving Roderick. Even more compelling is Roderick's half-crazed pursuit of the enigmatic Christina Light. (James himself was so taken by her that he made her the focus of a later novel, *The Princess Casamassima*.)

Two differences are likely to be noted between this novel and James's other work: the relative simplicity of style (even in the final revised version) and an unusually full and sensuous evocation of setting in Italy and Switzerland.

The Story:

Rowland Mallet, expecting to sail for Europe in September, visited his cousin Cecilia in Northampton, Massachusetts. He was an idle bachelor, having inherited money, and he felt that he was leading a useless life. Having a passion for art, he was interested to learn of a young sculptor who lived in the town. On meeting the intense, impetuous Roderick Hudson and seeing proof of his talent, he offered to subsidize the young artist for a period of study in Rome. Rowland gained the assent of Hudson's widowed mother. At a farewell picnic Rowland had a last talk with Mary Garland, distant cousin of Mrs. Hudson, who had been visiting in Northampton. Rowland realized that he would not see her for

perhaps three years. In their brief acquaintance she had come to mean a great deal to him. But on the Atlantic voyage Roderick Hudson told Rowland that he was engaged to Mary.

In Rome that autumn, as Rowland had expected, Roderick responded to the stimulus provided by the art treasures of the city. He assimilated experience readily and became eager to create masterpieces of his own. Rowland was pleased with his role as patron and nourisher of talent.

One day, while Roderick sat sketching in the Villa Ludovisi, the two companions observed a trio of passers-by—a shabbily appearing man, a middle-aged woman, and a young girl with blue eyes, dusky hair, and perfect features. Roderick was enraptured and yearned to model her. But they did not stop.

Rowland began to introduce Roderick into society. The young and handsome sculptor, attractively impertinent and strident, became a favorite. He spent the days hard at work and the nights in Roman drawing rooms. His first work, a life-sized Adam, drew admirers to his studio. Among them were another sculptor, Gloriani, and a young American painter, Sam Singleton. Gloriani was skeptical of Roderick's staying power, while Singleton was an uncritical worshiper. Roderick frequently grew lyrical about his own brilliant future.

But the onset of summer brought Roderick to an impasse. His exuberance and inspiration departed. Rowland Mallet prescribed a change of scenery, and the two left Rome to ramble northward. Roderick desired to spend most of the summer alone.

In England, after a month with no word from Roderick, Rowland dispatched a letter. The reply was unsettling; Roderick had been gambling and was heavily in debt. When the two friends met in Geneva, Roderick admitted debauchery but felt no remorse. He had learned his susceptibility to the beauty and mystery of women.

Back in Rome, Roderick was discon-

tented and worked only by fits and starts. Then one day into his studio burst the man and woman and the beautiful young girl whom he had observed in the Ludovisi gardens. Madame Light, her daughter Christina, and the Cavaliere Giacosa, had come to see the rising young sculptor and his works. Roderick insisted he must do a bust of Christina.

Mrs. Light was a vain, silly widow. She had picked up the old Cavaliere in her European ramblings and now lived solely to marry Christina to a fortune. Christina's beauty was supplemented by wit, will, and education.

During the winter Roderick worked on his bust of Christina and became enamored of her. Rowland feared her influence on him. She seemed selfish and vicious, a complex person who demanded worship. Meanwhile Christina's mother was becoming established in Roman society. Roderick took a commission from an American snob to create in marble the idea of Intellectual Refinement.

The old Cavaliere became Rowland's confidant. Roderick would find his love unrequited, he said. Mrs. Light was determined that Christina should marry a man of wealth and position. Though Rowland and Christina disliked each other, they achieved a certain understanding. Christina confessed that she despised her own egotism and longed for someone to free her from herself. Roderick's adoration continued.

In an effort to cool the relationship, Rowland informed Christina of Roderick's engagement. Roderick's subsequent anger revealed something to Rowland: his friend lacked a feeling heart; he did not mind hurting Mary. Rowland's faith in Roderick's potential had been foolish. The artistic temperament was amoral.

Winter brought a new personage on the scene. Prince Casamassima was seen with the Light entourage. He was Mrs. Light's choice for Christina.

Rowland encountered Christina at various places in Rome, and their exchange of frank confidences continued. Rowland

requested her to leave Roderick alone. She seemed to desire Rowland's respect, but when she left Rome briefly, Roderick followed.

Despite Roderick's interlude of riotous living in Naples, Rowland's fondness for him was undiminished. Even when he stopped work on Intellectual Refinement, Rowland tried to understand.

Christina's engagement to Prince Cassmassima was announced, but Roderick continued his pursuit. Rowland admitted himself disgusted with people. His good deed had turned sour; Mrs. Hudson and Mary Garland would be hurt to learn the truth about Roderick. His thoughts kept going back to Mary.

Hoping to save the situation he cabled for Mrs. Hudson and Mary. Roderick greeted Mary in a state of drunkenness. To Rowland she was more attractive than before.

Although Christina's wedding date was set for June, Roderick's infatuation continued. Rowland was astonished to learn from Madame Grandoni that his own love for Mary Garland was perfectly evident. Then Christina broke off with the prince. Roderick isolated himself in his quarters for a week to contemplate this good fortune. Mrs. Light summoned Rowland to talk sense to Christina. Mrs. Hudson and Mary, still unaware of the complex situation, suffered in silence.

Rowland unwillingly conversed with Christina. Although Prince Casamassima's money did not excite her, she refused to accept Roderick's proposal of marriage. Three days later Christina and the prince were suddenly and privately married. Simultaneously a secret came to light: Christina's father had been Mrs. Light's lover, the Cavaliere. Christina had married quickly, before such a scandal could cause the prince to break with her.

Roderick, angry, disappointed, miserable, was ready to leave Rome. He placed

himself entirely in Rowland's hands. Rowland agreed when Roderick confessed to his mother and Mary that he was a failure. Mrs. Hudson was appalled to learn that the uncompleted Intellectual Refinement was a \$5,000 commission.

They all went to Florence for the summer. Rowland vaguely hoped that Roderick could still pull himself together. Rowland admired Mary more and more. After an idle, dreary summer they moved on to Switzerland. Roderick's perceptions of beauty were as acute as ever, but he was unable to do anything constructive.

Rowland pressed the point about Roderick's engagement. Mary did not interest him, but he did not break off. Roderick saw no point in Rowland's desire to keep secret his admiration for Mary.

In one of their daily rambles, Roderick and Rowland encountered the Prince and Princess Casamassima. Christina detested her husband. Hitherto petulant and unforgiving of her, Roderick turned to pursuit again. The next day he asked Rowland for one thousand francs to meet her at Interlaken. He got some money from Mary when Rowland, at the end of patience, refused the request. He chided Rowland for moralizing, but Rowland admitted his love for Mary.

Roderick then disappeared. A spectacular mountain thunderstorm arose in the afternoon. He had not returned by dawn the next day. Sam Singleton, who had been diligently sketching all the while Roderick had idled, had stopped for a visit. He and Rowland went to look for Roderick. His body lay beneath a high cliff three hours' walk from the inn. He had fallen, apparently, on his way to Interlaken.

Mrs. Hudson and Mary Garland went back to Northampton. Rowland, with his inexhaustible patience, frequently came to call on Mary.

ROOM AT THE TOP

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Braine (1922-)

Time: After World War II

Locale: Warley, a town in Yorkshire, England

First published: 1957

Principal characters:

JOE LAMPTON, an ambitious young Yorkshireman

ALICE AISGILL, his mistress

SUSAN BROWN, his fiancée

CHARLES LUFFORD, his boyhood chum

Money, influence, and the girl one loves have almost always been legitimate objectives in the world of modern fiction and in the world of reality, too. But John Braine's *Room at the Top* is a study of a young man who wants these things too badly and who early in life finds that success can be costlier and emptier than youth believes it to be. A hardworking, thrifty, ambitious young man, Joe Lampton succeeds in winning what he wants, but he finds that his run of success is not an end in itself insofar as lasting happiness is concerned.

The title of this novel by John Braine, regarded by many critics as one of the leading figures in an informal group once known as Great Britain's Angry Young Men, holds some ambiguity for American readers, inasmuch as the title, *Room at the Top*, will remind the American of the cliché that there is always room at the top of the ladder of success for competent, ambitious young men. The title of the novel, however, actually refers to Joe Lampton's lodgings at Warley, an industrial town in Yorkshire, a lodging which opens up a new way of life for the young Englishman. Having been born and reared among people of the working classes, Joe Lampton is eager to rise out of his background, and he is painfully aware, even resentful, of his past. The very fact of his having been an enlisted man rather than a commissioned officer during World War II is something he would rather forget. Shortly after the end of the war he decides to leave the little industrial town of Dufton, and he

finds himself a respectable, semi-professional post as an accountant in the treasurer's office of the municipality of Warley, a city some distance from his native town. Warley's social scale is geographically defined by the presence of a hill called the Top, with the wealth and influence of the Warleyites increasing as they live higher on the hill. Quite by chance the room Joe Lampton arranged for by correspondence is in the comfortable home of an eminently respected and middle-aged couple who live rather far up the Top. His lodgings in this home and the social sponsorship of the Thompsons provide Joe Lampton with a springboard to middle-class respectability and success, so that his "room at the Top" becomes a symbol of his successful march to achieve his ambitions.

It is not unfair to call Joe Lampton an opportunist and a schemer; therefore the author has provided his protagonist with a background to motivate his character and provide psychological realism. Like many another young man, both American and British, Joe Lampton's military service during World War II has hardened him to the unpleasantness in life. Having had his parents killed by the only German bomb to fall in Dufton, having helped clean up the gory messes left after bombing raids on airfields, and having himself spent many months as a prisoner of war in a German camp, Joe Lampton is prepared to strive desperately to win a place in a world that seems to him a grim, unrelenting place in which materialistic values are the only ones which

count. It is not surprising, then, to find him pursuing what he wants—money, influence, love, and beauty—with a tough single-mindedness that surmounts obstructions with a striking kind of obstinate strength. One should note, too, that the Yorkshire people have a reputation for obstinacy and strength of character among their fellow Britishers, a point that might escape the American reader, although its significance would not be lost to his English cousin.

In laying out their design for worldly success, Joe Lampton and his friend Charles Lufford set up a scale for people, men and women, running from one to twelve, with a Number One person being at the top of the scale in personality, physical attractiveness, wealth, influence, and respectability. As part of his plan for success, Joe Lampton sets for himself a marriage to at least a Number Two woman, preferably a Number One. Such a woman comes into his orbit shortly after his arrival in Warley, in the person of Susan Brown, daughter of the town's wealthiest industrialist. But being only nineteen and something of a child, Susan Brown takes a long time in the wooing, with her father and her family's position in the community obstacles to be overcome. Even though she meets Joe Lampton in the respectable surroundings of the Thespians, Warley's amateur theatrical group, Susan is not sure immediately that Joe Lampton is her man, and her parents are certain that he is not.

Eager for affection and the pleasures of physical love, Joe Lampton chances ruining his design for success in life by striving for an affair with a married woman; failing once, he tries a second time with another woman, Alice Aisgill, and soon becomes her lover. The affair with Mrs. Aisgill, a woman ten years his senior, almost proves to be Joe Lampton's undoing in a way he does not foresee. Completely aware of the social dangers in the affair, he fails to reckon with himself and the emotional upheaval it can bring to him, causing him almost, but not quite, to

throw over the possibility of marrying Susan Brown. On the night he gives notice to Alice Aisgill that their affair is finished, the woman has an automobile accident that fatally injures her in a ghastly fashion. For the accident Joe Lampton blames himself. So far as he is concerned, the best thing in his life has been thrown away, ruined, because of his driving ambitions to win materialistic success. Even the sympathy of his friends, all of whom knew of the affair in one way or another, holds little help for him, even after they convince him that her affair with him was but one of many for Mrs. Aisgill. Everything his friends say is a dagger in Joe Lampton's heart; when he is told that Alice Aisgill would have ruined his life and that no one blames him for what has happened, he can only reply that therein lies the trouble. He has everything he has wanted, for his coming marriage to Susan Brown, which prompted his breaking off the affair, will fulfill his dreams of a wife, wealth, and a place in society; but the tragedy of knowing and losing a not-so-good woman is a tragedy which brings disillusion. Joe Lampton becomes what he and his friend Charles Lufford call a zombie, a type disapproved of because such persons seemed dead to what youth believes is important in the world.

Room at the Top is the kind of novel that presents sex, ugliness, and brutality with candor, even with enthusiasm. Its tone establishes a connection between John Braine and the many young American authors who are involved with what is sometimes called the cult of brutality. Like many heroes of recent novels about young people who endured that war, Braine's protagonist, Joe Lampton, discovers that there is more to life than selfishness and egocentricity and material values. He regrets the loss of youth and innocence, and he realizes, as some recent fictional heroes do not, that maturity brings disillusionment and also a truer knowledge of reality than one knows at the age of twenty or so.

Also like many other recent novels by young men, *Room at the Top* is a frank book, perhaps too frank for some adult readers with tender sensibilities. The frankness is not sensationalism for its own

sake, but the rawness is sufficient to make a reader wonder if part of the novel's initial impact may not be due to its frankness, rather than to the overall artistic quality of the book.

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA

Type of work: Poem

Author: Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)

First published: 1821

The early nineteenth century, which marked the beginning of modern Russian literature, has become known also as the Golden Age of Russian poetry. In a sense, it was the Russian counterpart of the Elizabethan Age, with the difference that its fullest expression did not occur in drama, but rather in poetry, and in the poetry of Alexander Pushkin in particular. Pushkin's long narrative poem, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is a monument fixing both the beginning of its author's literary career and the start of that Golden Age.

The poem begins with the marriage of Princess Lyudmila and Ruslan. After their wedding feast they are conducted to the nuptial chamber. "The jealous garments fall onto the Byzantine carpets. Do you hear an amorous whisper, and the sweet sounds of kisses? . . . Suddenly thunder and light!" The young princess is stolen from Ruslan's arms by the wizard Chernomor. Lyudmila's father is outraged and promises his daughter to the man, any man, who will bring her back. Ruslan undertakes adventure after adventure to regain his love.

One phrase used to describe the poem has been "eighteenth century frivolity." The content is, indeed, fantastic and often exclusively decorative. But what marked it as a breakthrough for Russian literature, and what raised a storm of public controversy, was not the content but the diction of the poem. Before Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Russian literature was committed to the heavy use of Church-Slavonic and artificial borrowings from French. Pushkin used the lan-

guage of contemporary Russia—vigorous, expressive, and rich in its blend of colloquialisms—and the more sophisticated language of educated Russians. The literary tradition of the eighteenth century dominated by Karamzin and Zhukovsky had aimed at bringing the literary language closer to spoken Russian. But only Pushkin succeeded in fusing folk language and lore and literary tradition into a unique style.

As a boy Pushkin was taught by French tutors, and French remained his second language. From his old nurse he learned both Russian as it was spoken by the common people and a vast store of folk tales and legends. Actually, Pushkin's style was never strictly colloquial. Perhaps it has been best explained by the critic W. E. Harkins who has said that although Pushkin's verse is completely natural, it is always a poetic language. Perhaps it seems natural in retrospect because it has become an integral part of the Russian literary language.

When *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was published in June, 1820, it was confronted by controversy and debate. Russian literature had for some time been divided into two opposing factions. The conservatives wanted to rid the literary language of all foreign elements and to promote the use of Church-Slavonic. Their leader, Alexander Shishkov, identified the Russian language with the language of the Orthodox Church and much earlier literature. He advocated forming new words from archaic Slavonic roots. In contrast, the school of younger and more talented

poets used the language of Karamzin and excluded Slavonicisms. Their aim was to vitalize Karamzin's excessively refined diction, but it was Pushkin alone who was able to preserve the elegance of Karamzin's language, yet add to it the colloquial ease and vigor that it had lacked. Thus, Karamzin's language, as improved by Pushkin, was to become the standard literary language of nineteenth century Russia.

Beyond this, the conservatives also condemned *Ruslan and Lyudmila* for its lightness, its romanticism, and its "excess of national color." Although the style of the poem was related to that of Ariost's epics, the tone and atmosphere were not so much romantic froth as they were the basis for a light-hearted parody of solemn epic pieces. Perhaps the matters that really disturbed the conservatives were the lusty descriptions and the conversational, nonchalant diction of the poem. The accusation of an excess of national color is also hard to justify. The folk element amounts only to a few names like Baba-Yaga and King Kashchey, characters of Russian folk tales. But the poem does not have the spirit of the folk epic. Instead of the simplicity and directness of a peasant's story, it exhibits a highly elaborate and conscious artistry. It does not take life seriously or solemnly, but creates a fantastic, ballet-like decoration. The poetry of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* has, in fact, been compared to the ballets of Didelot, which were popular in Pushkin's age and about which he himself wrote enthusiastically. *Ruslan and Lyudmila* itself was turned into a ballet and was later made into a libretto by Glinka.

It is easy to understand the place *Ruslan and Lyudmila* had in Pushkin's development. It was his first production as a poet of an exquisite technique. But he had not yet found a subject which stirred him, and, consequently, the poem lacks any deeper meaning. It is beautiful poetry but nothing more; there is no significance behind the adventures and no emotional or intellectual overtones. Only

years later, with such poems as *The Bronze Horseman*, was Pushkin able to mate technique with high significance. Nevertheless, readers were charmed by the poem, and for many years Pushkin was called "the singer of Ruslan and Lyudmila." Zhukovsky, a popular poet of the early nineteenth century who himself had influenced Pushkin's verse, after reading the poem sent his portrait to Pushkin with the inscription—"To a victorious pupil from a defeated master."

It is harder for us to appreciate the poem today. We scan literature for messages and symbolism which have no place in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Yet even if we minimize the artistic value of the poem, it retains a tremendous historical importance. Despite the fact that its folk quality was peripheral and decorative, it was the first work to bring literature back to the Russian people. Although Karamzin had brought the language of literature closer to the spoken forms, his works were never read by the common people. *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was the first work to be read by members of every Russian social class. Its break with the established tradition, its avoidance of sentimentality, and its frank abandonment to a gay epicureanism made it one of the most popular works of the day. And it was the first of a number of exquisite poems that have given Pushkin his persistent reputation as the most outstanding Russian poet.

After 1820, Pushkin proved that the style he used in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* could be adapted to all literary forms. With great versatility he wrote historical poems, short stories, essays, dramas, critical studies, and lyrics. But in all he successfully integrated the disparate elements of the Russian language on the model of his first long work.

While Pushkin was working on *Ruslan and Lyudmila* he was also writing political poems and epigrams which were widely circulated. One of his poems, an "Ode to Freedom," and several of his epigrams were reported to Tsar Alexander I. The outraged ruler's first decision was to

exile Pushkin to the Solovki Monastery on the White Sea where he would be forbidden to write. Only because of the intercession of Zhukovsky, Turgenev, and other influential friends, Pushkin was sent instead to the south of Russia. There he was able to write and, more important, to develop the ideas that he was to explore in his most outstanding works. There also he began his famous

novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. Pushkin never returned to the pure devotion to technique he allowed himself in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*; as he devoted more attention to content he became a greater poet. Nevertheless, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was a necessary step in his development, and the poem itself has brought delight to many readers.

THE SACRED FOUNT

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry James (1843-1916)

Time: The 1890's

Locale: Newmarch, a British country estate, and the train from Paddington Station to Newmarch

First published: 1901

Principal characters:

THE NARRATOR,

GILBERT LONG,

GUY BRISSENDEN,

GRACE BRISSENDEN ("Mrs. Briss"), his wife

FORD OBERT, a painter

MRS. MAY SERVER, and

LADY JOHN, all house guests at Newmarch

To the mystification engendered by the late novels of Henry James possibly no work has contributed more spectacularly than *The Sacred Fount*, that relatively slight book which falls between the weightier *The Awkward Age* and *The Ambassadors*. The elaborate account of a weekend guest's attempt to fathom the relations existing among his fellow guests, the novel baffles in no small part because it is as short on facts—that Mrs. Server has "none too much money" and has lost three children, and that Ford Obert is a painter are virtually the only ones to which the reader is treated—as it is long on speculation, so much so that the very concept of "fact" comes under question. James has in this, more than in any other of his novels, ruthlessly stripped away those historical and environmental encrustations which we ordinarily read for clues to character, in order to concentrate on those relationships which for the book's narrator are alone

telling, if ultimately untold. That the narrator's speculations are finally refutable or, worse, uncorroborable is perhaps the ultimate mystification, one compounded even further by James's feat in casting the ironic spotlight on this his sole novelistic first person narrator (and hence our only source of information, other than reproduced dialogue) in order to call both his motivation and his interpretation into question. Yet this extraordinarily modern opacity of the novel anticipates Robbe-Grillet, even if anti-thetically and is hardly attributable, as has often been said, to a failure of James's imagination. For the book is itself about the failure of the imagination. It is the fullest, wittiest, and darkest development of that breakdown of consciousness which hovers behind all the major James works and its opacity is only the lucid rendering of such a subject.

The Sacred Fount begins as the nameless narrator, said by many critics to be a

novelist—although the only evidence for his being so is the curiosity of the typical Jamesian observer—encounters two former acquaintances, Gilbert Long and Grace Brissenden, both of whom are also going to the party at Newmarch, and both of whom appear to him considerably changed. Long, who has previously struck him as a handsome clod, seems suddenly to have become clever, and Mrs. Brissenden, who is supposedly at least forty, seems to have grown younger, or at least not to have aged. In conversation with Mrs. Briss, as she is called, the narrator receives the *donnée* for what is to become his theory, that Gilbert Long's intellectual improvement is the result of his having entered into relation with a clever woman, identified by Mrs. Briss as Lady John, another guest at Newmarch, who is coming on a later train with Guy Brissenden, her screen, as that gentleman's wife intimates, for her affair with Long.

Arriving at the party, the narrator fails, just as he has initially failed in the case of the wife, to recognize Guy Brissenden, who, though only in his late twenties, looks older now than his wife—appears, in fact, "quite sixty." This discovery completes his theory that as one party to a relationship gains, either physically or intellectually, the other loses, is drained by the "sacrificer" until quite depleted, a theory which he communicates to Ford Obert, who has assumed Mrs. Briss to be considerably younger than her husband.

The remainder of the novel details the narrator's attempts to corroborate his theory. His discovery that Lady John is as witty, and superficial, as ever leads him to reject her, in a conversation with Mrs. Briss, as Long's "victim," for the partner to such a relationship would of necessity lack her former attributes. At this juncture the two conspirators discover in colloquy two figures who prove to be Briss and May Server, the latter presumably using Briss as a screen, just as Lady John was formerly said to have done. Mrs. Briss happily lights upon as the very

woman for whom they have been looking to serve as the replacement for the now unacceptable Lady John. Mrs. Server is "all over the place," flitting from man to man in an attempt to mask the loss of her faculties, Mrs. Briss confides to the narrator in their next interview (which is their last, save for the extraordinary showdown between the two which occupies the book's last three chapters), and her description tallies remarkably with that given the narrator by Ford Obert, who sees Mrs. Server greatly changed from the self-possessed woman she was when she sat for him to have her portrait painted. By this time the narrator, on the grounds of both Mrs. Briss's and Obert's testimony and of an encounter with Mrs. Server herself, has come around to accepting Mrs. Briss's account, but his tender feeling for Mrs. Server, his sense that he and his collaborator are poking into a matter which is none of their business, and perhaps also his pique that Mrs. Briss is beating him at his own game, prevent him from acknowledging to her fully the degree of conviction to which she has brought him around.

The amount of data with which the narrator is confronted becomes prodigious, but the theory expands to accommodate all of it: Lady John makes up to Briss to conceal the fact that she is in love with Long; Mrs. Server's single appearance with Long (the point is actually made by Mrs. Briss) is the exception which proves the rule; Mrs. Server's avoidance of the narrator, out of all the men at the party, indicates her awareness that he is on to her predicament (it never strikes him that she may find his patent inquisitiveness obnoxious); and Mrs. Server's frequent juxtaposition with Briss is less Mrs. Briss's postulated screen than the mutual tacit commiseration of the two victims, each conscious of the other's depletion (it has been the narrator's hypothesis that the two victims know while the two victimizers do not). A conversation with Briss, who tells the narrator that Mrs. Server has nothing to say and

confesses a certain terror of, and yet fascination with, her, confirms his view of their condition and mutual relation—even though Briss's confusion might as easily be sincere, and Mrs. Server's evidently morbid state attributable to the loss of her three children. Briss, however, may be covering an actual affair which he is having with Mrs. Server and which prompts him to send Briss off in pursuit of her. In the next scene the narrator himself engages in talk with Mrs. Server, hinting in a veiled manner at her relation with Briss and gleaning that she takes comfort in his awareness of her plight and his tolerant sympathy. Mrs. Server's participation in the dialogue is, however, so vague and so slight (most of the chapter is simply given up to the narrator's ruminations on the scene's meaning) that the reader can take it as evidence of everything or nothing.

In the ensuing scene Lady John confronts the narrator with the fact that his supersubtlety and passion for reading meanings into everything have the rest of the company in mortal terror, and she chastises him for sending Briss off to Mrs. Server when it is perfectly obvious to everyone with what loathing ~~she~~ inspires him. The narrator, in an elaborate subterfuge, attempts to convince Lady John that as Long is in love with her and he himself with Mrs. Server, she ought to relinquish Briss so that the narrator might at least have the pleasure of seeing the woman he loves, Mrs. Server, get the man she loves, Briss. Their conversation is halted when they see Mrs. Briss and Long deep in talk, a fact which leads the narrator to speculate that Lady John benightedly and jealously conceives a liaison between the two, whereas he, by dint of his "superior wisdom," knows them now to have come to a knowledge, and by the very agency of his inquiries, of their "bloated" or victimizing conditions, and to be joining together for mutual protection. As their talk ends, Mrs. Briss approaches him and briefly informs him that she wishes to speak to him later in

the evening, after the other guests have retired.

From here on the narrator's theory begins to crumble into myriad shards. First Ford Obert appears to inform him that Mrs. Server is no longer in her drained condition and that the man, whoever he may be, is out of the question since she has given him up. To top this blow, Mrs. Briss arrives to demolish what is left of the narrator's theory. There is nothing in what he says, she informs him, and she has speculated along his lines only under his spell. Mrs. Server is not the woman because there is no woman. Gilbert Long, as her conversation with him has amply testified, is as stupid as he ever had been. As a matter of fact, he and Lady John are lovers, a fact which squares perfectly with his theory because she is not drained (there being very little to drain) nor he improved. Moreover, she has it from Briss that Lady John and Long are intimate. What the narrator has thought he has seen is simply his insanity. Finally, to clinch her argument, to explain, in fact, her wriggling and self-contradiction throughout the course of the interview, Mrs. Server has not been using Briss as a screen; she has—and this from Briss's own lips—been making love to him. Also, Mrs. Server is sharply perceptive. At the narrator's amazed gasp, Mrs. Briss asks if that was not the very thing he had maintained. She then tells him he is crazy and bids him goodnight! And on this the narrator can only wanly observe that she has had the last word.

The facts toward which the narrator works, then, are finally unknowable. Whether Mrs. Briss is at the end telling the truth, lying in collusion with Long to protect their status in the sacred fount relationships to which they are parties, or attempting to shield the fact that she is actually carrying on an affair with Long, cannot be resolved. Pointing toward the last interpretation are the "facts" that Mrs. Briss and Long happened to be on the same train for Newmarch, that Briss had been placed in bachelor quarters, the

latter a circumstance peculiarly at odds with the narrator's belief that his wife's draining him is sexual in origin.

Such evidence is, like the rest in the book, more suggestive than conclusive. It is interesting to note that both Mrs. Briss and Long broach to the narrator the improvement in the other and that his theory thus receives its impetus and codification in terms which they provide but which she will, later, take great pains to deny. Even more interesting, perhaps, is the fact that the narrator's sense of Long's improvement stems from Long's cordially recognizing him instead of, as is his habit, snubbing him. Here is an indication of the tenuous and egotistical base upon which the entire theory possibly rests, especially as, outside of Mrs. Briss's initial testimony, there is no external evidence whatsoever of Long's presumed metamorphosis. Add to these a propensity and necessity to lie, surely almost as great on the part of the other characters as on the narrator's, and any theory as to the relations at Newmarch collapses because it is incapable of accommodating all the possibilities invoked.

What remains, then, is the discrimination between the narrator's method and Mrs. Briss's tone, his method itself the very preclusion of his sharing her tone, which is that of involvement in his theory. Not only is the possibility of participation in life as coincident with artistic creation called into question, but also art's validity in its own terms, for the novel's end relegates art and the creative imagination to the realm of delusion and madness, containing within themselves the principle of their own destruction.

The narrator is an example of the Jamesian creative imagination, reduced in this case to absurdity, and his theory a type of the work of art, the inclusive imaginative construct. Before his interview with Mrs. Server, the would-be ultimate test of his theory, he pictures himself at the center of the imaginative vision, where possibility looms in every direction and symmetry is achieved. His passion

for symmetry even leads him to postulate that should Gilbert Long change back to his old condition Mrs. Briss would, in exemplification of the same law, change back too. But the inclusive theory must rest on exclusive facts, and the narrator, working inductively from presumed effect to presumptive cause which exemplifies a general law, must depend upon particulars which exclude other possibilities and alternative hypotheses. To be inclusive in application, the theory must be exclusive in exemplification. The antinomy is present in most of James's fiction and in the Prefaces, but in *The Sacred Fount* it receives its most desperate turn, for not only is the imaginative construct necessarily subject to limitation, but its relevance to actuality is unknowable, perhaps a phantasm.

If, however, the limitations of artistic creation can be construed as analogous to those of actively living, the narrator's theory may be viewed as in some way figuring his own state. Early in the novel Grace Brissenden tells him that he has affected her quite as Mrs. Server has affected Mr. Long, and at the end he feels totally drained by her. This ironic application of the book's central image may be variously interpreted: perhaps Mrs. Briss is draining him by leading him totally astray; more likely, however, the efforts of the creative imagination drain him of vitality, rendering him incapable of life, and, conversely, his imaginative strength is sapped in the presence of Mrs. Briss, life's indelicate child. Life is the sacred fount for art, but art is divergent from life. At one point the narrator confesses that it would have been as embarrassing to reveal how little he knew of experience as it would have been to tell how much he had lived in fancy. He might well be summing up his entire condition, the condition of being thoroughly out of things, for which he tries to compensate in his hypothetical feeling for Mrs. Server.

In a much discussed scene early in the novel, the narrator and Mrs. Server pro-

nounce antithetical views of a portrait of a young man holding what is presumably a mask. The scene is a nicely comic version—comic because, though his intent is to draw from Long a brilliant commentary which will corroborate his theory, the narrator proves himself so garrulous that Long is unable to get a word in—of the doubloon chapter of *Moby-Dick* in that the external object, in this case an aesthetic object, is merely the receptacle for a solipsistic projection of individual consciousness. The narrator sees the mask, the work of art, as creating life, giving it meaning, but the book's final view is already latent here, that of the

impossibility of ultimate knowledge or absolute meaning. Meaning is relational to the individual consciousness, and the creative consciousness collapses at the end a method without meaning, a form without content. The "palace of thought" crumbles a "house of cards," not necessarily under pressure from the truth but of internal necessity. For his is the "imagination of atrocity" of which Lady John has accused him, atrocity which of its own nature it necessarily wreaks upon itself. If there is a Sacred Fount, it is inaccessible to the narrator, and his vision perishes of its own aridity and impossibility.

THE SACRED WOOD: ESSAYS ON POETRY AND CRITICISM

Type of work: Critical essays

Author: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

First published: 1920

Matthew Arnold, says Eliot, was not so much engaged in establishing a criticism as in striking at the uncritical; he was less a critic than an advocate and champion of criticism. These statements about Arnold are only partly true, but they are helpful. They are equally helpful, while again only partly true, if applied to Eliot himself. For Eliot is not only a critic of literature but also, as the subtitle of this volume suggests, a critic of criticism. In the first group of essays in *The Sacred Wood* this fact is made particularly clear.

Eliot does not really tell us, in "The Perfect Critic," precisely what the perfect critic is. We gather that Arthur Symonds, the successor, in his impressionism, to Pater and Swinburne, is less than perfect because what is not realized in Mr. Symonds' verse can be found in his critical prose. The functions of the poet and the functions of the critic should not be confused.

The critic, we are told, should look only and firmly at the literary work. His aim should be the fair exercise of comprehension, and the free comprehension is that which is completely dedicated to

inquiry. Bad criticism is nothing more than an emotional response; that is, of the critic's own feeling. A true literary critic should be void of emotions, says Eliot, except those brought about by a work of art. The end and aim of the true enjoyment of poetry is contemplation in its pure state, from which all the mishaps of personal emotion have been withdrawn.

These ideas are followed up in "Imperfect Critics," a series of brief essays in which Eliot discusses Swinburne, George Wyndham, Charles Whibley, Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, and Julien Benda as critics. Swinburne is praised before he is dismissed as a person who appreciates rather than criticizes. Literature is to him simply an ardor. Wyndham's enthusiasm for literature fails to offset a lack of critical depth; he is the typical English Man of Letters to whom literature is but a hobby. Whibley is capable of communicating a taste for literature, but he is not a critic. All three of these English writers lack the faculty of keeping themselves separate from the work, the ability to achieve a state of contem-

plation freely detached from literature and to see it from all sides.

The American critics, More and Babbitt, have attempted to create a criticism free of temperament. In this respect they show the influence of French criticism, an influence lacking among English critics since Arnold. Both suffer, however, from a certain academic solemnity, a type of provincialism which tends to offset the broadening influence of French criticism. It is, in fact, a French critic, Julien Benda, who seems to rank highest in Eliot's mind among these Imperfect Critics. He has something the American critics do not, formal beauty; but, handicapped by the age in which he writes, he is reduced to being the perfect example of a gleaner of the mediocre of the times.

In the first two essays Eliot demonstrates that the critic, as critic, must suppress his own temperament: it is irrelevant to the art he is examining. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" he says that the poet too must suppress his individual temperament: the poet must to express a certain medium, not a personality. In fact, poetry is not a releasing of emotion, but rather a flight from emotion; it is not the showing of personality, but a flight from personality. The poet can extinguish mere personality by submerging himself in the mainstream, the tradition, of literature. What makes a writer traditional is the possession of the historical sense, an insight not only into the pastness of the past but also of its continuing presence today. The poet should view the past not as something dead but as something already living—and himself as a part of that living organism.

When Eliot discusses the possibility of a poetic drama in the chapter with that title, he observes that poetic drama, as a vital form, died out when it was no longer believed in as a dramatic tradition. The nineteenth century was aware of the tremendous cleavage between the past and the present, but not of the continuity between past and present. The nineteenth century lacked traditional forms to work

in and as a result made literature a vehicle for ideas. But art should not *present* ideas but *replace* them. Form itself—traditional form—is in itself an exact way of thinking and feeling. It is through form that art should make its statements, that is, by *being*, not simply expressing, a way of life.

"'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" makes the point that "rhetoric" is not properly used to mean inflated speech but is rather, at best, the correct manner of speech for a given situation, correct because it comes from that which it expresses. The chapter titled "The Blank Verse of Marlowe" traces Marlowe's development as a dramatist by examining the innovations in his use of blank verse.

The essay "Hamlet and His Problems" is best known because it contains Eliot's judgment that Hamlet is "an artistic failure" and because it expresses his theory of the "objective correlative." The play fails because there is no objective correlative for the emotions of Hamlet the character, no external equivalent (a collection of objects, a circumstance, a series of events) for his internal state of being. Emotions *per se* cannot be dramatized. Hamlet goes mad because he is in the grips of an emotion which fails to find release in action; Shakespeare fails because he is confronted with an emotion he is not able to represent in art.

In the chapter on Ben Jonson, Eliot attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of a dramatist who, he says, is now the interest only of people concerned with literary history or antiquity. His defense rests largely on the claim that Jonson's plays are self-contained worlds. His characters may not have the added dimension that Shakespeare's characters have, but Jonson's characters fit logically into the emotional world of their time. The world Shakespeare depicts is larger, but no more complete, than Jonson's. Though Jonson did not attempt to achieve a "third dimension," his world is large enough, one in which a poetic imagination has free play. The point Eliot makes

is simply that Jonson should be judged on his own terms.

As Jonson succeeds, by virtue of creating a self-contained world, so Philip Massinger fails because he did not create a world of art from within his personality. He is a brilliant technician but not, in the deepest sense, an artist, and the reason is that his feeling for things was left behind by his feeling for language. There is no correspondence between language and things; his style is involved, but his feeling—his imaginative vision—is simple, and merely covered over by acquired ideas. Massinger's talent is unquestionable, but his imagination, says Eliot, is meager.

Applying the same test to Swinburne that he had to Jonson and Massinger, Eliot find that the world of Swinburne's poetry does indeed have the required entirety and self-sufficiency for lastingness and justification. It is a world of a unique kind, however, a world of words. Swinburne is therefore not properly subject to the ordinary sort of criticism, which assumes that art necessarily corresponds to the real world. Swinburne's world does not depend on the world it imitates. Rather, it creates its own limits and establishes its own terms; it has its existence not in the meanings of words but in their sounds.

In the essay on Blake, Eliot returns to the idea of tradition. Eliot acknowledges Blake's many merits but finds him handicapped by not having at his disposal an inherited set of beliefs. Blake invented his own philosophy and therefore he was inclined to put more stock in it than an artist should; that is why he was eccentric. We have a certain respect for his philosophy, but we should realize that it was a fault of his environment that compelled Blake to provide himself with it. His genius needed, but lacked, a frame-

work of already well-entrenched ideas which would have kept him from doing his own philosophizing and allowed him to keep his mind on the problems of the poet.

At the end of the Blake essay Eliot writes that Dante is a classic, and Blake simply a poet of genius, because Dante used his background of mythology, theology, and philosophy as a framework for his art. The next essay, appropriately enough, and the last in the volume, is "Dante."

Philosophical poetry, says Eliot, is legitimate poetry if the philosophy is necessary to the arrangement and the arrangement is necessary to the poetic beauty of the parts. The poetry of Lucretius is legitimate philosophical poetry because Lucretius endeavored to discover the tangible poetic equal for his philosophical systems and to find its actual equal in vision. His philosophy, however, was not full enough in varied feeling to be capable of full expansion into pure vision. Dante, on the other hand, not only had at his disposal mythology and theology which had been deepened and rounded by time, a frame for ideas which Lucretius did not have; but also a set of beliefs and assumptions that were more comprehensive, more ordered, and more complete than those of Lucretius. Consequently, Dante's philosophy was capable of being translated into a great vision, comprehensive, ordered, and complete. The goal of a poet is to present a vision. The fact that his visions are so complete is a great merit of Dante's poetry. And his philosophy is not merely stated but is expressed by its appropriate poetic equivalent, its vision. Dante succeeded in handling his philosophy, not as a theory but in terms of something discerned, better than any other poet has been able to do.

SALAR THE SALMON

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry Williamson (1897-)

Time: The present
Locale: The Two Rivers, Southern England
First published: 1935

Principal characters:

SALAR, a five-year-old cock salmon
GRALAKS, a three-year-old grilse, Salar's mate
TRUTTA, a seven-year-old sea trout
SHINER, a retired poacher
OLD NOG, the heron
JARRK, an old seal
PETROMYZON, the lamprey
GARROO, a cannibal trout
ORCA, a grampus

Two forces dominate the life of Salar, "the Leaper," as the Romans called the fish. He must eat to live, and he is at the mercy of the elements, for the sea and the river are in continual movement to reduce all life to the components of water and mud, from which the great cycle of life begins anew. Like most fish, Salar is a cannibal who both eats and is eaten. Although the novel opens with a brief summary of the salmon's life (hatching in a moorland stream, passing down to the ocean, returning to the same moorland stream to spawn), only the return up the river, beginning in early spring and ending in late winter, is detailed in the story of Salar. The novel is in four sections: "Tideways" describes Salar's fight to find his original river; "Spring Spate" gives us his ascent up to the pool where in the third part, "Summer River," he waits for spawning; "Winter Star-Stream" describes the spawning and death of Salar.

As the novel opens Salar is a three-foot salmon weighing twenty pounds and two ounces, five years old, and so fighting fit from his past two or more years in the Atlantic that he will not need to eat for a year and has enough energy to ascend the river five hundred and seventy times; it will take all that energy to ascend it once. This is the salmon known to fisherman and sportsmen. There are many other kinds, especially the kelt, the salmon that has spawned and is good for nothing. Other dialect terms—smolt, grilse, rawner—describe the salmon at various stages of

its life cycle and show Williamson's acquaintance with the lore which centuries have built up around the salmon in its native habitat, the moors at the head of the Two Rivers. This lore is now known only to the old poachers such as Shiner, who is helping a man (the author) to write a book about the salmon but who is not known, apparently, to the Two Rivers Conservancy Board which controls the taking of salmon from the mouth and reaches of the Two Rivers. Throughout the book there is an unresolved debate about the activities of the Board; the old salmon fishermen in the tidal waters claim it operates solely in the interests of the rich amateur fishermen of the upper reaches; part of this debate is about the "kelt," whether it can actually renew itself in sea water or not. Williamson seems to think that the subtle chemistry of the salmon's body can change its appearance from the muddy exterior of a salmon that has idled away the summer in mud pools to the shining body associated with the salmon.

This chemistry is part of the complexity and prodigality of nature which the whole novel celebrates. Salar's homing instinct is a remembered pattern of balances operating in the band of cells along either side of his body, which keep adjusting to the shifting weights or pressures of the water around him and thus give him his remarkable ability to hover in quiet water and to find the best way up rough water or through the tide races. The prodigality of nature is seen in the

thirteen thousand eggs the grilse, or female salmon, lays on the "redds" shallow hatching beds upstream, and in the flow of milt which the cock salmon fights to spread over the eggs; a young smolt manages to fertilize only nine of a flow of two hundred and thirty eggs from a grilse. The world in which Salar lives needs this prodigality to counter the incredible odds against any of the fertilized eggs hatching, growing for two or three years as smolt, passing down the river in a spring spate past the greedy bass in the tide-waters, and surviving the years in the Atlantic before facing the return journey against the nets and lines of man.

The scene of the novel, the Two Rivers, is the same as that of *Tarka the Otter*, Williamson's first nature novel, and the daughter of Tarka appears to chase Salar in the chapter titled "Water Death." Other characters, such as Old Nog, the heron, reappear, but the book contains many new characters along the same lines—a name given to one bird or beast which represents all such creatures. Salar is accompanied up the river by Trutta, a seven-year-old sea trout; by Gralaks, the grilse with whom he mates; and by Shiner, a retired poacher still in love with the salmon, who follows them in the upper river, helps them over the weirs, and is the only living thing to mourn the death of Salar. Throughout the novel a variety of enemies attacks Salar but the most persistent is man. At the river mouth he escapes the nets of the salmon fishermen only with the help of Trutta who smashes a hole for his escape. At the end of his ascent in the spring spate he is caught by "Black Dog," a fishingly so named and has to tear himself off the line and spend weeks rubbing the hook out of his jaw. Salar is a battle-scarred veteran when he meets his end.

Salar's natural enemies change according to the season and the water he is in. In "Tideways" the chief enemies are not the bass that he fought his way through two years before—he is eleven times bigger than he was then—but the seals and

lamprey. The old seal, Jarrk, both eats and plays with salmon, stealing them from the nets and laughing at attempts to shoot him, infuriating the fishermen and giving rise to the comedy of the chapter titled "Estuary Night," when the fishermen fool the Board's bailiff. Petromyzon, the lamprey, is no laughing matter; she eats her way into Salar's flank, draining his strength, until a hagfish, a kind of lesser lamprey, in turn leeches on to her and eats its way into her stomach, thus releasing Salar with a large red wound on his side. Some of these enemies are small, like the male and female sea lice which cluster on Salar's shoulders but which die in fresh water; their place is then taken by small maggots and a deadly fungus which in the end furs most of Salar's body, and by the salmon pest or bacillus which has eaten his strength inside. Although the book is organized so that only one enemy at a time attacks Salar, they sometimes come in droves—in the early chapters the seal is accompanied by the conger eel, porpoises, and a grampus—and when one drops away another replaces it, as the threadworms, leeches, and eel elvers swarm in to the attack after the lamprey is gone.

The second part of the novel is more marked than others by the names of sections of the river Salar travels through from the tidehead to Junction Pool to Denzil's Pool. He escapes with a terrible struggle the experienced fishermen, as the kelt does not, and he eludes the poachers with the fortuitous assistance of Old Nog, who upsets Shiner's poaching, and of Shiner himself when he gets revenge on a gang of poachers who are using his net to take the exhausted fish from their summer resting place in Denzil's Pool. In the third part, "Summer River," Williamson turns to describing the life cycle of the ducks, bats, river fish, and insects which make up the perpetual movement of nature; two chapters, "June Morning" and "Mayfly," are devoted to the brief span of the libellula, or dragon fly, and the danica, or mayfly. This sec-

tion of the novel ends with the death of a stag and an otter in their respective haunts, events stressing man's place in the natural scheme as the supreme killer and thus supporting the theme exemplified in Shiner: that man preys on all creatures, including his fellow man.

The fourth part, "Winter Star-Stream," is the shortest, culminating in the mingled triumph and tragedy pervading the book. Salar, Trutta, and Gralaks have met and lost a number of salmon in the journey from the sea and while they waited during the long summer drought for the autumn rains that would raise the level of the headwaters of the river on the moors, so that the big fish could make their way to the immemorial spawning grounds. In a comic scene Shiner enables them to escape three poachers at Steep Weir. He then follows the fish upstream. They are now accompanied, however, by Garroo, the cannibal trout who is waiting for the eggs. Strange cock salmon gather around Gralaks and fight Salar as the grilse spawns in bursts of eggs and the males lay their milt in the gravel depressions of the riverbed. The fighting of the males, the emission of

milt, the slow icing-up of the river, the spreading of fungus and bacilli so exhaust Salar that Shiner can gently handle him into deep water. But the rains that would carry Salar, now a kelt, down to the sea for renewal do not come; the otters finally corner Trutta and kill him; when the spate comes it washes the dead, decaying corpse of Salar down to the sea.

The writing in this novel is more accomplished than that in *Tarka the Otter*, not so much in style as in the arranging of events in a simple but dramatic chronological sequence, as when the drowned lamb floats past Salar, shortly followed by its drowned ewe. The enormous voracity of nature, patient and furious, fills the book with action corresponding to the power of Salar's leaps from the water and up the weirs. But the sense of power in Salar is consistently shadowed by the presence of greater and smaller powers that wait upon him, bide their time, and accomplish their purpose. The novel is a somber reminder of the transience of power and beauty and of the inescapable round of nature in which all creatures, man included, are permitted only briefly to flourish.

SARTORIS

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: 1919-1920

Locale: Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi

First published: 1929

Principal characters:

BAYARD SARTORIS, son of John Sartoris and grandson of old Bayard

NARCISSA BENBOW SARTORIS, the second wife of Bayard, sister of Horace Benbow

AUNT JENNY (VIRGINIA DU PRE), the sister of Colonel John Sartoris, Bayard's great-great aunt

OLD BAYARD SARTORIS, Bayard's grandfather

OLD MAN FALLS (WILL), a ninety-four-year-old doctor-of-sorts and a close friend of the family

HORACE BENBOW, Narcissa's brother

HARRY MITCHELL, Horace's neighbor

BELLE MITCHELL, Harry's wife, who married Horace after divorcing Harry

BYRON SNOPES, a writer of indecent love letters to Narcissa

SIMON STROTHER, the Negro driver and helper for old Bayard and Aunt Jenny

Sartoris is the third of Faulkner's novels but the first in which he established the family of Sartoris and the fictional Mississippian town of Jefferson, seat of Yoknapatawpha County, which remained his locale in most of the novels he wrote afterwards. The principal character in the novel is Bayard Sartoris, a young man of twenty-six who has just returned from service with the British Royal Air Force in World War I. In a series of actions which reveal a compulsive, self-destructive lust for violence, the young veteran turns his homecoming into tragedy. He begins by purchasing a high-powered new car which he drives at a fanatical speed about the countryside, terrifying pedestrians and wagon drivers; he gashes his head in an attempt to ride bareback on an untrained stallion; he overturns the car into a creek and fractures his ribs in the process. After his bones are mended, he resumes his reckless driving habits, and on one wild ride he plunges over a cliff, causing the death of his grandfather. He flees abruptly from home and finally meets his own end as a test pilot, when he dies in the crash of a crackpot's experimental airplane.

This skeleton of the action in the novel can barely suggest the range and depth of its implications. Much of its power derives from an elaborate counterpoint between past and present. Bayard Sartoris' hunger for violence and recklessness is part of his ancestral inheritance, a kind of inborn fever that courses through his blood. At the beginning of the novel, we learn that Bayard's wife has died in childbirth and that the war has recently taken his twin brother John, who was shot down in a plane while fighting the Germans. But John's death, consequence of an action which Bayard himself thought foolhardy, is only a symptom of the desperate carelessness with which the Sartoris men have always lived. Young Bayard returns to a house that is still haunted by the ghosts of his great-grandfather, Colonel John Sartoris, and of his great-great uncle, who was also

named Bayard Sartoris. The memory of Bayard is kept alive by young Bayard's great-great aunt Jenny, sister of the dead Colonel John, who never tires of telling with romantic (and unconsciously ironic) reverence the story of how her brother Bayard "gallantly" gave his life at the age of twenty-three during the Civil War; he was killed when he acted on a chance word from General Jeb Stuart and attempted to steal anchovies from a Federal encampment. On the other hand, the ghost of the dead Colonel John perseveres in the tireless recollections of Will Falls, an impoverished nonagenarian who subsists on regular handouts from young Bayard's grandfather, old Bayard, who is president of the local bank. In return for the banker's generosity, Falls sometimes provides a backwoods brand of medical care (he successfully removes a wen from old Bayard's face with an Indian salve considered wholly unacceptable by three doctors), but more often he brings stories of Colonel John, old Bayard's father and Falls's contemporary. Falls recounts Colonel John's exploits in the Civil War, and he also tells us how the colonel calmly shot two Yankee carpetbaggers who had tried to gain voting rights for Negroes. It is Falls, too, who adverts to Colonel John's death at the hands of a man named Redlaw. One evening, without apparent provocation, Redlaw shot the colonel in cold blood in the public square of Jefferson.

But the Sartoris clan is distinguished, putatively, at least, for more than recklessness and violence. Through the history of its generations, transmuted into the shining gold of legend by the alchemy of Falls's admiration and Aunt Jenny's romantic imagination, we find a powerful strain of heroism, grandeur, nobility, and aristocratic elegance. This is the magnificent myth; and in spite of the fact that the Sartoris men so often live violently and die absurdly, the myth survives. Young Bayard must somehow sustain the would-be tradition in a time of peace, and his extravagant exhibitionism

with the wild stallion and the high-powered car is only his peculiar way of expressing an inherited compulsion. Indeed, even though Aunt Jenny and old Bayard repeatedly warn him against the dangers of speeding, his wildness with the car becomes a kind of heroism in the eyes of Narcissa Benbow. She is a frail, quiet, frigidly self-conscious young woman (her name is a clue to her character) who still adores the memory of young John, but who gradually transfers her love to young Bayard. During his bedridden convalescence after he fractures his ribs in the automobile crash, she visits him faithfully, reads to him, and gently penetrates the hard surface of his bitter obsession with violence and with the only person he has ever loved, his dead brother John. Gradually and delicately, she wins enough of Bayard's attention to become his second wife.

Seemingly, his marriage to Narcissa invests young Bayard's life with a kind of gentleness, dignity, and purpose. For a time at least, she is distinctly a stabilizing influence; she exacts from him a promise that he will curb his reckless driving. But Narcissa brings to Bayard her own pale shadow of sordidness, one that constantly threatens the tranquil elegance of the Sartoris home. Before her marriage, she had been receiving unsigned, semi-literate, indecent love letters which she has kept. The letters came from a man called Byron Snopes (again the Christian name is significant, this time ironically so), whose surname in the later novels of Faulkner comes to epitomize the crass rootlessness of a family that is the antithesis of the Sartoris clan. In addition, the end of the war has brought home Narcissa's beloved brother Horace, who lives ostensibly in a world of poetry, fine-spun rhetoric, and exquisite glass-blowing (he produces lovely vases from time to time), but who actually is conducting a rather sterile love affair with Belle Mitchell, the wife of his friend and neighbor, Harry Mitchell. Neither Horace Benbow's passion for Belle nor Byron's desperate yearning for

Narcissa is satisfactorily resolved in this novel, nor does either man emerge here as a fully developed character. (Faulkner takes them both much further in his later work.) But we see enough of these men to understand the forces which mysteriously menace the apparent serenity of Narcissa's marriage to Bayard.

In spite of its occasional violence, *Sartoris* is not so terrifying or tragic in impact as several of Faulkner's greater novels, *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, or *Light in August*. His portrayal of the Negro characters who decorate the canvas of his tale in such rich abundance is witty, deft, and buoyant. Early in the novel we meet Simon Strother, the garrulous and superannuated family retainer, when he comes in a horse-drawn carriage to pick up old Bayard at the bank. Simon is filled with a sense of his own importance as the driver for the most aristocratic family in town, and he manages to give a kind of theatrical majesty to so prosaic an action as the departure of the carriage with the master inside. We learn, however, that Simon is just as venal and parasitical as many another Negro in the town, for we discover later that he has misappropriated the money entrusted to him by elders of the local Negro church. Claiming that he has lost the money in a bad investment, he succeeds in persuading old Bayard to pay off the church elders; but he has actually used their money to keep a young mistress. One day his body is found in her cabin, his head battered by an unknown assailant. He is a lesser victim of the violence that pervades the novel.

But for all his inconsequence, what happens to Simon is a good example of what happens to the entire world of Sartoris, to the legend of heroism and majesty. With her brusque and candid insight, Aunt Jenny, herself the repository of the legend, knows only too well the disparity between the romantic ideals inherited from the past and the futile destructiveness of the present. Narcissa marries young Bayard in an atmosphere

bright with peace and promise, and shortly afterward she conceives his child. But marriage is not enough for Bayard; he reverts to his savagery behind the wheel of his newly repaired automobile, kills his grandfather when the car tumbles over a cliff, and promptly abandons his new wife. He seeks escape for a time in the company of the MacCallums, a country family with whom he and Johnny used to go hunting. But there is only pain in their talk of his grandfather or of old hunting days with Johnny, and soon he must be on his lonely way. Later Narcissa learns of his death in the airplane crash. The fatal accident seems to finish the Sartoris line.

But the death of young Bayard is robbed of its finality by the almost simultaneous birth of his child, an event which lends a typical Faulknerian ambiguity to the conclusion of the novel. The Sartoris family has not yet succeeded in destroying itself wholly; in the birth of the child, a boy, there is hope for future generations of the line. Yet before he is born the young boy's future is overshadowed by a fate that comes out of the past. Narcissa wants to christen him Benbow, but Aunt Jenny calls him Johnny while he is

still in the womb, a name recalling the impulsive recklessness of the two John Sartoris who came before him. The final scene is ostensibly a peaceful one, with Narcissa softly and gently playing the piano for Aunt Jenny on a calm, windless night. But the ghosts of past generations still linger in the house, and through its rooms and hallways we continue to hear the dark whisperings of disaster and fatality that have always intermingled themselves with the legendary glamor of the Sartoris name.

Indeed, in *Sartoris*, as in the great novels that follow it, no member of the mythic family dies an absolute death. His ghost remains, his spirit fills the bones and bloodstream of each of his descendants. The novel in which Faulkner introduces this family is far from perfect; it is flawed with broken pieces and unassimilated parts, like the characters of Horace Benbow and Byron Snopes, or the visit of young Bayard to the MacCallums. But in *Sartoris* Faulkner established the materials of his fictional world, and out of these materials, molded, shaped, and transformed into the shapes of his great novels, he created the work on which his reputation stands.

SATIRES

Type of work: Neoclassical verse satires

Author: Nicholas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711)

First published: *Satires* I-IX, 1667; *Satires*, X-XII, 1713

The name of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, or more usually now, Nicolas Boileau, is often linked exclusively to *The Art of Poetry*, his critical treatise setting down the rules and unities of French classicism. He has received the reputation of prophet and lawgiver for that movement, which is in fact an entirely false emphasis. The *Art of Poetry*, written in 1674, was a summary and compendium of standard poetic practices, of the rules French literature had been operating under for the entire century. In truth, Boileau is best remembered as a practi-

tioner, not a theoretician, of French verse; and his *Satires*, written during two widely separated periods of the poet's life, are a notable example of the skill with which he returned French poetry to a character of imitation of nature. Seventeenth century poetry had turned chiefly to the burlesque and heroic styles, which were highly conceited and artificial. But with his satires, written with common sense as a norm and the expression of truth as a goal, Boileau did much to purify his medium.

He had a genius for satire and ample

opportunity to find subjects for his verse in the brilliant and sophisticated court of Louis XIV, the Sun King. The monarchy had become absolute in France, and the ideal of the courtier—the aristocratic, gracious, elegant, witty, refined, accomplished man—afforded ideal occasion for a satirist to comment upon the vanity, ambition, intrigue, and posturings that invariably accompany competition for royal favor.

Boileau was presented to the king in 1669. Despite his trenchant criticisms of the vices and foibles of society, he remained in favor at the court for thirty years. Not only was his frank and courageous outspokenness notable, but his benevolence, generosity and kindness as well. Accordingly, his satirical writings are not stinging lashes of vice, as with Juvenal or Swift, but a gentler ridiculing of humanity's failings. His twelve satires touch on many facets of the fashionable life of his times and give a lively indication of what it was like to live in seventeenth century Parisian society.

The second, seventh and ninth satires, written in 1664, 1663, and 1667 respectively, are concerned with the art and craft of the satirist and with Boileau's own fortunes in that calling. Boileau liberally criticizes his fellow poets and makes no pretense of acceding to public opinion about the merit of any writer. However high a poet's fashionable reputation may be, if he cannot rhyme Boileau says so. He attacks many of his contemporaries, but seldom drops into *ad hominem* criticism. Moreover, time has proven his opinions to be remarkably just: the names that receive most of Boileau's scorn have become as obscure to the present day as their poetry is mediocre. But Boileau's friends—Molière, Racine, Chapelle, Furetière, La Fontaine—and others whom he praised, remain to the present the outstanding seventeenth century French authors.

Satire II, addressed to Molière, laments the difficulties of finding rhymes without having them tyrannize over the

sense in a poem. In mock despair, and in perfectly-rhymed Alexandrines, Boileau rehearses the poet's plight, the necessity of either glib and vapid epithets to match a rhyme, or else wrenched syntax and broken phrases.

In the seventh satire, Boileau discusses a tentative plan to banish satire from his writing, saying it is a malicious style that makes the author many enemies. He would much prefer to write poems of praise. But alas, all his poetic powers desert him at such an attempt; his talent, he concludes, lies in the exposure of folly, and a satirical poet he will have to remain. The ninth satire has a similar tone: the author affects to scold himself for his feeble efforts to reform the city by his verse. He points out the vanity of any hope for esteem of his work and says that the fools he castigates are not even worth spilling ink over. But as the poem develops, it shifts subtly into an ironic ridicule of all the people who are the just subjects of the satirist's pen, and becomes a triumph, not a reproach, to Boileau.

Another group of satires is directed toward the life of the city, with its would-be aristocrats and pseudo-sophisticates. Satire I, written in 1660, demonstrates how the poet is abused and neglected in the city, while the lackey, the toady, the pedant, are all exalted, and all vices flourish. Satire VI continues this theme with an account of the noise, dirt, confusion and crime that surround the city dweller. These two were originally composed as one poem, in imitation of Juvenal's Satire III. Boileau's third satire, possibly written in 1665, tells the uproarious tale of a feast given by a gourmand who pretends to be a gourmet and of the ridiculous pretensions to elegance and erudition of the host and his country-bumpkin guests. The execrable repast is reduced to shambles by a hair-pulling scuffle between the guests; one an absurdly aspiring poet, the other an absurdly aspiring literary critic.

Satires V and XI catalogue the excesses of the town by an inquiry into what constitutes true nobility and true

honor. In the first, written in 1665, hereditary nobility is ridiculed, along with its trappings of heraldry and elaborate equipage. Boileau shows how the bearer of a name famous of old for courage and daring may be an arrogant coward, retaining nothing of the virtue of his ancestors. On the other hand, a truly valorous man who is of humble descent ought to be able to adopt Achilles, Alexander, or Caesar for his ancestors, the author says, since he behaves like them. Ancient days, when nobility was a valid indication of virtue, are contrasted to the present, whose wretched aristocrats are so deep in debt that they must barter their titles for enough gold to maintain the ostentation considered essential for a peer. Satire XI exposes similar abuses of the ideal of honor. This was written considerably later than the preceding poems, in 1698, at a time when Boileau's family was engaged in a lawsuit over the validity of their own hereditary title to the nobility (which was finally proven to be false). Various erroneous ideas about honor are shown: ambition, avarice, vanity. But for Boileau, honor resides ultimately only in justice, and he castigates the inability of self-interested and contentious men to understand or practice justice.

To this point, the satires have all been directed against the specific failings of people, their personal failings and vices. In Satires IV and VIII, written in 1664 and 1667, Boileau takes a broader view and attacks the very condition of being human. Satire IV argues that all men are mad, but each man believes that only he is sane. The theme developed is the perennial one of man's ability to see the mote in another's eye but not the beam in his own. All men are mad in their attachment to something: learning, refined manners, religion, atheism, wisdom, money, gambling, poetry. He concludes that it is probably better for men to be mad and happy than coldly reasonable with nothing to give them joy. Satire VIII takes a sharper tone on the same subject, the universal folly of man. Boi-

leau adopts a mordant disdain for all men's accomplishments, comparing men to beasts and finding the latter more humane in their activities. Depravity and corruption are everywhere, and even man's capacity for reason is so abused and ignored as to set him beneath the irrational animals. These two broader-ranging satires approach a kind of misanthropy not seen in the witty ridicule of foppery and the vanities of the others. All the poems, however, are in the traditional voice of the satirist, who is the gadfly of society, attempting to correct men's faults by turning on them the bright clear light of reason and common sense.

Another time-honored subject for the satirist is woman, and it has its place in the Boileau canon. His Satire X on women is the longest of the twelve. Not published until 1693, it is prefaced by an apology to the fair sex for the unkind portraits drawn therein, suggesting that since they are such near-perfect creatures, they cannot surely resent a well-meaning attempt to refine them a trifle more. The poem is a dialogue between Boileau and a friend, Alcippes, who has decided to take a wife. Boileau depicts the consequences of marrying various kinds of women: the adulteress, the coquette, the card-player, the penny-pincher, the shrew, the hypochondriac, the pedant, the falsely-pious. All these character vignettes are artfully and vividly portrayed and have a devastating effect upon the poor lover, Alcippes. When he vows his lady is none of these, the poet declares that he has not told a quarter of the vices women can have. The confused would-be bridegroom protests that in any case he can always divorce her if she should be so bad. Boileau then triumphantly adduces woman's final villainy: once her claws are in a man she will never let him go!

The twelfth and last of Boileau's satires is quite different from the others. Written in 1705, "L'Equivoque" is a serious attack on the problem of ambiguity in language deliberately used for evil ends by subtle men. The meaning of

equivoue (ambiguity, duplicity), expands through the poem, not only to indicate verbal ambiguity but also confusion of intentions, thoughts, expressions—all sorts of misconceptions of the human mind and, most seriously, the way these have altered and corrupted Christianity from its original purity and holiness. As a theological argument, the poem attacks everything that Boileau considered heresies, particularly Jansenism and Jesuitism. The sincerity of this piece is beyond doubt, for Boileau was all his life a good Catholic; but its poetic

power is perhaps less than in some of the earlier pieces. For several years after its composition, the poem was not permitted publication.

Taken as a whole, the satires of Boileau are characterized more by a genial gaiety than any deep bitterness or spite toward their victims. There is malicious wit, but no indignant rage, and the butt of the joke is ridiculed rather than condemned. In all, the *Satires* are a delightful account of one man's view of a fascinating and glamorous era of French civilization.

SATIRES

Type of work: Satiric dialogues

Author: Lucian (c. 120-c. 200)

First transcribed: Second century

The satires of Lucian are directed not so much against social customs and manners as against the ideological attitudes of men in the Graeco-Roman empire. Of a conservative spirit, Lucian wanted to recall people to the old ethical standards and values by exposing the shams and affectations of religion, philosophy, pedantry, and superstition. So vehement did he become in his attacks, it often seems that he is condemning not only the abuse but the thing itself, particularly in the satires on philosophy.

The *Dialogues of the Gods* consists of twenty-six conversations among the Olympian deities. Their own words condemn them, for in their bickering, gossip, complaints, and flatteries they show themselves to be as prideful and ignorant as human beings, and as much enslaved by their ignoble passions, so that they are not at all worthy of the awe and reverence men on earth accord them. Hera nags at Zeus because of his myriad love affairs; Asclepius and Herakles argue over precedence in seating at the dinner table; Hermes whines over all his work as messenger to the gods; Zeus scolds Helios for giving the sun-chariot to Phaeton; Apollo and Hermes chat about the similarity of

the twins Castor and Pollux; Ares whispers sedition behind Zeus' back; the Judgment of Paris is enacted. Each vignette develops its own little drama, and through them Olympus is lowered to the level of the common marketplace.

The *Dialogues of the Sea Gods* follows the same pattern. Poseidon comforts his son Cyclops after Odysseus had duped and blinded him; the river Alpheus rehearses his love for the river Arethusa; the metamorphoses of Proteus are marveled at by his friends as if he were a circus magician; nymphs and Nereids talk about their lovers and gossip about one another.

The satire in *The Dialogues of the Dead* is more penetrating and mordant. The residents of the Underworld, newly dead and long-dead alike, live together in uneasy fellowship. They still dispute over the petty things that concerned them when they were alive. Men who on earth were highly honored, fabulously wealthy, physically beautiful, are leveled to dry and uniform bones, but still they squabble over reputation, appearances, precedence. Cynics argue with epicureans, the once-poor taunt the once-rich, and Charon prays for war or plague on earth

so he may collect more fares on his ferry. Achilles learns there is no glory on the far side of the Styx, but Alexander the Great tries unsuccessfully to impress his magnificence on his fellow shades. Menippus, the cynic philosopher, thrives in Hades because all his earthly activities were directed against the vanities that men lose at death. Socrates and Diogenes appear, also Agamemnon, Ajax, Tiresias, Menelaus, Paris—soldiers, courtiers, kings, and philosophers reduced to wandering shades who can do nothing but talk of the past.

Menippus the Cynic was one of Lucian's favorite characters, and he is frequently used as a touchstone for satirizing pretentiousness in philosophy and religion. In the dialogue that bears his name, Menippus tells his friend of a necromantic experiment he made in order to visit Hades (where he appears in *The Dialogues of the Dead*). Troubled by the great discrepancy between the licentious freedom of the gods—as the poets describe them committing murders, rapes, incest, usurpations—and the strict laws forbidding men to engage in the same activities, Menippus had gone to the philosophers to have the situation explained to him. He discovered them to be as helpless and vicious as ordinary men, and sometimes even more ignorant. Finally he decided to seek out the seer Tiresias in Hades and ask him how a man should live. With the help of a Chaldean soothsayer, Menippus gains entrance to Hades; he sees the judgment of men's shades and their punishments. In the Acherusian plain of Hell he sees the common dead and the demi-gods, all indistinguishable now, all reduced to dusty bones. Men who were kings on earth now occupy the same allowance of space as beggars, and they are forced to tutor or sell fish or cobble shoes. The philosophers indefatigably carry on their learned disquisitions. While Menippus is in Hades, an assembly is called, which he attends. A decree is sent out against rich men on earth, that their souls after death be sent to inhabit asses for a quarter-million years, to learn hu-

mility. Finally finding Tiresias, Menippus explains his dilemma. The sage tells him the life of the ordinary man is best; he should shun clever logic and metaphysical speculation, live cheerfully and work productively. Convinced, Menippus returns to earth.

A companion piece to this satire is the *Icaromenippus*, in which Menippus tells a friend of an aerial expedition he made to visit Heaven. After observing the vices and follies of men on earth, their ignoble goals and contemptible behavior, he vows to find a worthier occupation, to discover the divine order of the universe. But when he observed the workings of the stars and the nature of earth, he could make no sense out of them. Again he went to the philosophers, only to find them as confused as himself but too proud to admit their blindness. Menippus then fashioned a pair of wings for himself, one from an eagle, the other from a vulture, and from the top of Mount Olympus launched himself heavenward, hoping to get some first-hand information about the universe. A rest stop at the moon and a chat with Empedocles, whom he found there, enables him to look down on the entire earth and its inhabitants going antlike and self-importantly about their affairs. All their crimes are revealed to him. Continuing on, he arrives in Heaven, is admitted to the presence of mighty Zeus, and explains his mission. The god unbends, quizzes him about weather conditions, the price of wheat, social news, his own popularity among the people. Menippus is invited to a banquet, at which Zeus denounces to the company those philosophers about whom Menippus has been complaining. The gods decide to annihilate them all in four months' time. Menippus is returned to earth and deprived of his wings, for the gods cannot have mortals disturbing them whenever their fancy moves them. Finishing the narrative to his friend, Menippus goes off to tell the philosophers of the doom pronounced on them.

Another story of a journey is the dia-

logue of Charon and Hermes. Tired of his ferryman work, Charon takes a holiday to visit the earth and see what life is like, that men should so lament the loss of it when he conducts them to the underworld. He persuades Hermes to assist him, and the two pile up four mountains to give Charon a view of the world from a good vantage point. The greatest cities seem to him nothing but little animal dens. A charm of Hermes sharpens Charon's eyesight enough to see all human activities. He observes men striving for fame, glory, power, and wealth, never thinking of the death that broods over them, even as Charon broods. Solon, a wise man is the only one aware of mortality, and Charon watches him vainly trying to warn King Croesus to take less interest in his gold. Because Charon has heard the dooms of many men pronounced by the Fates, he watches them and comments on the vanity of their mortal strivings. He looks at the ostentatious tombs great men provide for themselves and derides this worldly display. He asks to be shown the cities of Babylon, Ninevah, Tyre, but Hermes tells him they have all been long destroyed. Wonderingly, Charon concludes that men are utter fools: nothing they do either comes with them after death or endures after them on earth.

Philosophy receives another drubbing in *The Sale of Creeds*. Zeus auctions off philosophers: Pythagoras, Diogenes, Heraclitus, Socrates, Democritus, Epicureans, and Stoics. Various dealers question them and bid on them. Philosophy appears like any market commodity. A sequel to this is the *Fisher*, in which these philosophers, granted a day's respite from Hades, come up to earth to murder Lucian for his cavalier treatment of them. Lucian protests that he is a faithful admirer of philosophy and proposes that his case be formally tried, with Philosophy herself as the judge and the several philosophers as the jury. Philosophy agrees and brings her waiting-ladies, Virtue, Temperance, Justice, Culture, and

Truth. The trial opens with Diogenes speaking for the prosecution. He accuses Lucian of ridiculing, parodying, and scorning philosophy, and teaching his audiences to flout and jeer also. (Diogenes adds that in the sale of creeds, he himself went for threepence) Lucian replies that he never abused the true philosophers, but only those who corrupt the doctrines, the hypocrites who want to be honored as philosophers but behave like rogues. He expatiates on the corruptions of philosophy he sees around him in the world, and he appeals at last to Truth to confirm his words. Truth and Philosophy agree, and even the philosophers are convinced; they acquit Lucian. Together they decide to separate the true practitioners and punish the false ones. They call all who claim to be philosophers to the Acropolis, to make their defense before Virtue, Philosophy, and Justice. Very few appear. Then Lucian calls out that largesse is to be distributed to philosophers, and a horde rushes in to receive it. And the latter group even look more like philosophers than the honest ones. When Lucian takes a fishing rod baited with gold and figs and dangles it over the city, he catches a variety of specimens, all described according to the branch of philosophy they claim to represent, all like monstrous fish. Because there are so many of them, Philosophy decides to send Lucian out with Exposure to crown or brand them all as needed.

Lucian's other satires are numerous and equally pointed. The *Cock* is about a cobbler's rooster that turns out to be a reincarnation of Pythagoras. The cobbler complains about the injustice of his poverty, and the bird answers, showing the misery that often accompanies riches and the vices of wealthy men. The cobbler, Mycillus, learns to be content with his station in life. The gods are again satirized and their dignities punctured in *Zeus Cross-Examined*, and *Zeus Tragedus*. The *Liar* inspects men's superstitions and prejudices. *Timon the Misanthrope* attacks again philosophy, oratory,

the gods, egotists, and parasites. Lucian's satire occasionally becomes so personal and venomous that it seems more a vent-

ing of personal spleen than a social corrective. But it is always vivid and entertaining, and often uncomfortably just.

SCOTT'S LAST EXPEDITION

Type of work: Journal of exploration

Author: Captain Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912)

Time: 1910-1912

Locale: Antarctica

First published: 1913

Principal personages:

CAPTAIN ROBERT SCOTT, R.N., in charge of the British Antarctic Expedition, 1910-1913

LIEUTENANT EDWARD R. G. R. EVANS, second in command of the expedition

LIEUTENANT VICTOR L. A. CAMPBELL, in charge of the Eastern Party
EDWARD A. WILSON, chief of the scientific staff

CAPTAIN LAURENCE E. G. OATES,

LIEUTENANT HENRY R. BOWERS, and

PETTY OFFICER EDGAR EVANS, members of the Polar Party

APSLEY CHERRY-GARRARD, Wilson's assistant

ERNEST H. SHACKLETON, a member of Scott's *Discovery* Expedition

ROALD AMUNDSEN, discoverer of the South Pole, 1911

The complete isolation and inaccessibility of Antarctica mean that all the literature relating to it falls into an equally self-contained unit. No man is a native of Antarctica, and it is the one part of the globe Western man can truly be said to have discovered; only in 1895 did he land on its shore. Three years later the first men to live through an Antarctic winter led to the *Discovery* Expedition under Captain Robert Falcon Scott R.N., from 1901 to 1904. The expedition spent two successive winters there. Scott thus became the first name associated with Antarctic living, and he established the pattern of arriving in summer, wintering, and exploring the following summer. Eight years later his death showed the perils not only of cold and blizzards but also of altitude, starvation, and scurvy which met those in search of the main prize in the Antarctic, the South Pole.

The South Pole has continued to dominate polar exploration in this century but not to the extent that it did before December 14, 1911, when Amundsen first reached it. The deaths of Scott and his

party in March, 1912, closed that chapter, leaving the way free for the main twentieth century activity of scientific exploration. Operation Deepfreeze took over after the Geophysical Year and its men now live the year round at the Pole, using as their main base in Antarctica the same McMurdo Sound from which Scott and Shackleton set out for the Pole in 1911 and 1908.

Scott's second, and last, expedition began as scientific exploration which included the Pole as a bid for popular support; the size and achievements of the expeditions and the fatal ending of the polar party have produced a whole sub-literature by some of the thirty-three members of the expedition—officers, scientists, and "men"—of which the best-known are *South with Scott*, by E. R. G. R. Evans, and *The Worst Journey in the World*, by Apsley Cherry-Garrard. The former, by the second in command of the expedition, was a result of hero worship of Scott; the latter serves as a corrective; written years later by a scientist, it is an attempt to place the whole expedition in

context. This attempt was necessary because the primary source, *Scott's Last Expedition*, was a two-volume assembly of records of which the first volume was rapidly separated from the second and reprinted alone many times. It contains "the personal journals of Captain R. F. Scott, R.N., C.V.O. on his journey to the South Pole."

Scott's Last Expedition has therefore two contexts: first, the two-volume work from which it comes, together with other books about the expedition. The second context is the record of Royal Navy exploration in the Antarctic, begun by Captain Cook in 1773 when he first penetrated the Antarctic Circle, and continued by Sir James Clark Ross in the nineteenth century when he discovered the Ross Sea and McMurdo Sound, and by Scott's *Discovery* Expedition. From this last came Shackleton's expedition in 1901-1909, when he got to within two degrees latitude of the Pole and his colleagues discovered the South Magnetic Pole. But the book which gives the first volume of *Scott's Last Expedition* both ironic and tragic overtones is Amundsen's record of his success in first reaching the Pole, a month before Scott. The irony of failing not only to discover the Pole but also to get safely back is provided by the elaborate preparations for the polar dash which fill the latter part of Scott's journal; the tragedy comes from the sight of the tracks of Amundsen's dog teams, showing Scott how easily the Norwegians team had traveled to the Pole, while Scott's party painfully manhandled their sledges most of the way there and most of the eight hundred miles back to McMurdo Sound.

Scott's expedition consisted of a Shore Party and a Ship Party, the latter to sail the *Terra Nova*, a broken-down tramp steamer, to McMurdo Sound in 1911 and to return in 1912 (and in 1913) to pick up the Shore Party. The Shore Party was divided into the Main Party at the base at Cape Evans and the Eastern or Northern Party under Lieutenant Campbell to

explore the Great Barrier of continuous ice which covered the southern part of the Ross Sea. Three journeys were made by the Main Party in the first year: first, the depot journey to One Ton Depot about one hundred miles south on the Great Barrier; second, the winter journey to Cape Crozier to study the embryology of the Emperor penguin; third, the first geological journey to the Western Mountains. Scott's journal covers only the first of these; Campbell's report with its record of a winter spent in an ice cave with no supplies except seal meat, is contained in the second volume of *Scott's Last Expedition*, as are records of the winter journey and the first and second geological journeys.

The polar journey consisted of five parties: two tractors (a third sank through the ice while being unloaded from the *Terra Nova*) hauled supplies to the Mid-Barrier Depot, about one hundred and fifty miles south of One Ton Depot; a dog party took supplies to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier up which the rest struggled to get off the Barrier and on to the Polar Plateau; two other parties hauling sledges by hand returned from the top of the Glacier and from Three-Degree Depot. The polar party comprised five persons: Scott himself, E. A. Wilson, head of the scientific staff, Lieutenant Bowers, Captain Oates, and Petty Officer Evans, the only one of the "men" to be included; the decision to include Evans was made because of his size and strength which would be useful in pulling the sledges. Although the calculated rations in the depots could accommodate the extra man, they were planned to keep the party going, not to replete the exhausted strength of these human animals; the rations were also planned to combat scurvy, the dreaded disease of exploration, but they failed in this because, totally deficient in vitamins, they consisted largely of ship's biscuit and pemmican. It is probable that Evans, on the same rations as smaller men, simply starved to death, and in this collapse

of the strongest at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier on the return journey Scott could read the fate of his party. They became desperate. When they descended from the high Polar Plateau (over ten thousand feet) they no longer suffered from the altitude sickness but met with blizzards; the Polar night was coming on. Evans died a month before Oates walked out of the tent into a blizzard to give his starving companions a chance of reaching One Ton Depot. They perished within about eleven miles south of it.

Scott's Last Expedition ends with the final letters of Scott; the "Message to the Public," records of finding and burying the bodies of Scott, Bowers, and Wilson, and a number of appendices. As the book

develops, the reader's foreknowledge of the end becomes increasingly tragic, giving to the final pages a glow which, on coldly rational grounds, they should not possess. Amundsen made it easily; he complains of having to rest fifteen hours a day because the dogs went so fast. One can add up the mistakes of Scott's expedition beginning with its divided purpose of scientific exploration and reaching the Pole. One can also sense in the doggedness and rigidity of mind shown by Scott and many of his party something of the spirit which was to lead to the glory and horror and futility of World War I, which began the year after the last of Scott's expedition returned to civilization.

SEAMARKS

Type of work: Poem

Author: St.-John Perse (Alexis St.-Léger Léger, 1887-)

First published: 1958

St.-John Perse has been one of the most mysterious figures in contemporary literature. Born in the French West Indies, educated in France, and until 1940 attached to the French diplomatic corps with a most distinguished record of public service, he has, since 1910, written poetry under an assumed name. It is said that during his early career the secret of his true identity was so well kept that even his closest colleagues did not guess it. At the fall of France during World War II he fled to England and then, by way of Canada, came to this country.

In the literary world he has also been a shadowy and mysterious figure, standing behind the scenes rather than on the center of the stage. Praised almost extravagantly by nearly every important Continental critic and translated by T. S. Eliot (*Anabasis*, 1930), he yet remains almost unknown to the reading public. The reason for this paradox is obvious enough: his poetry presents so many and such great difficulties that the average reader is, understandably, frightened away. Hugo von Hofmannsthal has pointed out

that Perse descends poetically from Rimbaud, so to the obscurities of the late Symbolists are added those peculiar to Perse himself. Eliot tries to supply a key to the reading of this poetry by stating that the apparent obscurity arises from the poet's device of suppression and elision. The reader must, therefore, follow the sequence of images, holding them in memory without attempting to understand too much at a time until totality of effect is achieved. In other words, the reader must not expect each line to yield a complete meaning, as is true in more conventional poetry; the "meaning" is to be found only in the poem as a totality of effect.

It might be suggested, without attempting to push the idea too far, that the genesis of *Seamarks* is to be found in Baudelaire's "L'homme et la mer," which begins:

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la
mer!
La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton
âme

Dans le déroulement infini de sa
lame. . . .

It is the eternal fascination held for man by what Perse refers to as the same worldwide wave, in evidence since Troy, for in the sea man beholds the beginning and perhaps the end of all life.

The poem seems to have been written during a period of years—parts of it were published in France in 1948—but it was obviously planned from the outset as an organic whole. It begins with an "Invocation"; then follows a section called "Strophe" which is divided into nine parts of varying lengths. Finally, there is a Chorus, and the poem ends with a short "Dedication." Obviously, Perse had in mind a very definite structure for his work, and the parts of the poem should be read in order. It might be added that the author does not use any of the conventional verse forms or indeed verse at all; this is "prose-poetry" of the type that the French have worked with since Baudelaire's time, except that *Seamarks* is on a much larger scale.

The word "seamark" can have two meanings, and perhaps a deliberate ambiguity in the title is intended. A seamark can be a line drawn on the coast to show the highest point reached by the tide, or it can be an object on land by which the sailor can plot his position. In either case, it is the meeting of the sea and the land—the deepest inroad into the coast of the sea from which the land rose and to which it may return, or that moment at which the helmsman can find the distance and the direction of the harbor where he will briefly anchor before resuming his voyage.

Those who have read Perse's *Éloges*, and especially the section called "The Glory of Kings," will find something familiar in the present volume. We have the same primitive yet hierarchic society; we have the same impression of vast crowds of people dimly glimpsed as they move solemnly through unexplained rituals. There are the patrician women, the tragediennes, the priests, the pilots—the

whole population of an unnamed city from an unnamed period of ancient history. It could be Minoan, Greek, or Roman, a city in Central America, or even a lost Atlantis; but always it is a city facing on the sea, not in the frozen North but in the warm Mediterranean or the tropics. We do not find the Anglo-Saxon fear of the ocean as a cold, gray waste of bitter wind and sleet and snow; instead, there is the influence of the author's childhood in the French West Indies—the lush images of a tropic coast and a tropic port with the sunlight flashing on blue water.

In following the development of the poem, the reader, as has been said, becomes gradually aware of a definite structure, so that that which seemed at first merely haphazard or chaotic begins to fall into place. At the beginning, the emphasis is focused on the seaport and its inhabitants; then we descend to the shore, to its harbor-works and beaches; then in the "Chorus" we are on the sea itself and have left the city behind us. We might even say that we are like a man who walks through the crowded streets of a great city swarming with people in order that he may reach the shore, there to plunge into the surf. There is also, as the poem develops, a transition from the personal to the impersonal: we begin with all the kinds of people in this nameless city, each group concerned in its own way with the sea, for even the lovers in "Narrow are the Vessels" interpret their passion in terms of the sea. Then we pass away from land and the world of men onto the open water and the impersonal, universal sea. Man has been absorbed into the sea.

As was true of the earlier poems of Perse, the reader of *Seamarks* is struck, first of all, by the incredible virtuosity of the writer's language. The style is unbelievably luxuriant; image succeeds image in bewildering succession. It is, most of the time, "pure poetry" in the sense that was made popular by the Abbé Bremond some decades ago, when he said that to read a poem as it should be read, that is, poetically, it is not necessary to grasp the

meaning. Yet Perse's language has the dignity and solemnity of a Greek chorus, as if no language were great enough for his subject.

Clearly this poem in praise of the sea is a labor of love on the part of the author. In the fifth section of the "Invocation" he speaks briefly in his own person of the long time that he had wanted to write this poem. The poem is the voice of a

man born on the coast and reared on the edge of the sea, who interprets everything in terms of it, and in whose ears the sound of the waves can never be stilled. And perhaps the poem can best be understood by someone who, like the author, has had a lifelong love of the sea. In spite of the many difficulties and obscurities, such a reader will experience the beauty of the poem and recognize its greatness.

THE SEASONS

Type of work: Poem

Author: James Thomson (1700-1748)

First published: 1730

Thomson's first long poem, the four *Seasons* and the concluding "Hymn," is often anthologized and frequently referred to but possibly rarely read either in the order of composition (*Winter*, 1726; *Summer*, 1727; *Spring*, 1728; *Autumn*, 1730) or in the order Thomson published the work as a long poem in 1730, the natural order of the year beginning with *Spring*. When read in the order of composition the gradual development of the poet's ideas and to a less extent his style can be seen, but since Thomson spent sixteen years revising his poems—even to transposing passages from one *Season* to another—the final order of the 1746 edition is probably the better, except that if the concluding "Hymn" is read both first and last one gets a better grasp of the ideas Thomson promoted within the poem. The philosophy is a considerable part of each *Season*: although rural scenes probably account for the largest single category of the 5,541 lines in the last edition there are long sections of scientific versifying on geology and astronomy, of descriptions of the Golden Age, of world geography, and most of all of the relationship of God to Nature, here the seasons.

These, as they change, Almighty Fa-
ther, these
Are but the varied God. The rolling
year
Is full of Thee.

Thus Thomson begins his "Hymn" to what he later calls "the God of Seasons" and summarizes his premises: there is ample and diverse evidence of God in our natural surroundings; the amplitude rewards the careful observer and the variety stimulates the rational powers of the philosophic man to reach conclusions about the working of the machinery of nature, of which the succession of seasons is primary evidence, always acknowledging the "mysterious round" of that machinery. The "Hymn" then rapidly surveys the variety of the seasons and reproaches the "brute unconscious gaze" of man which "marks not the mighty hand" of God at work. To compensate for this stupidity he calls on various aspects of nature—sky, wind, shade, water—to sing the praise of the Creator, as the poet does in the *Seasons*, and concludes rather weakly by saying that even if fate were to send him to a part of the globe which does not exhibit the temperate climate he celebrates he would continue his song. The "Hymn" concludes gracefully and peacefully with reference to the poet's death when he will then sing the beauties of Heaven; the reference in turn suggests the "infinite progression" of this and other worlds and in awful contemplation of "the mighty chain of beings" the poet neatly puts an end to the hymn of praise:

Come then, expressive silence, muse
his praise.

The original preface to *Winter*, which as the first composed could stand as the introduction to the whole work, shows that Thomson felt his subject radical (as opposed to the taste of the day for trivia) but improving; he intends to reform "the wintry world of letters" by "the choosing of great and serious subjects, such as at once amuse the fancy, enlighten the head, and warm the heart." In a rapid catalogue of rapturous exclamation about the variety of the seasons he justifies his choice by saying that "there is no thinking of these things without breaking out into poetry, which is, by the by, a plain and undeniable argument of their superior excellence." Having reconciled the appeal of nature to the head and heart, he justifies it again by reference to the Book of Job and, inevitably, to Vergil's *Georgics*.

Each season is introduced by a prose argument; the verse begins with an invocation to the Muse and a brief address to the patron concerned (originally done in prose) which is not always easily achieved:

O Dodington! attend my rural song, . . .

A planetary "fix" is then made to indicate the onset of the season, and usually a brief reference to that gone before; at the conclusion of the season we are pointed not to the next but firmly back up to God, the Provider of the virtues available "in season." Winter has the obvious structure of the onset, grip, and passing of the season; *Autumn* follows that pattern but also begins in the morning and ends at night; *Summer* describes, with much other material, a summer's day in three stages; *Spring* has the strongest structure, being a three-part description of the effect of that season on the three levels of Creation, vegetable, animal, and human; it is also, possibly for that reason, the most didactic. All the poems are kept on their course by invocations to the Deity, the first usually early in the poem, and by the retiring of the persona, the philosophic man, to some solitary spot (the woods in *Summer*, the fireside in

Winter) where he can muse to some improving effect.

Spring begins with plowing and sowing, coupled with an admonition to the contemporary Briton to "venerate the plough" as the ancients did and to the farmer to realize that the unpleasant northeast gales have the providential effect of banking up rain clouds which descend at the appropriate moment to water the springing crops. More advice is offered in the passages on spring pastimes which follow: do not use worms, use flies in fishing; do not rob nests or cage birds; and try to maintain a vegetarian diet. The wolfish cannibalism of man, who even crowns his harvest feast with the cooked carcass of the oxen who helped provide it, is here and elsewhere condemned as causing pain to beasts and to "the feeling heart" of the poet and is contrasted to the innocence of Eden, "the prime of day." From the vegetable world Thomson proceeds according to plan to "the rougher world of brutes" and begins with the passions of the bull and the stallion but rapidly reaches a description of newborn lambs. Passion, however, cannot be ignored in Spring and Thomson then turns to his third subject, "the infusive force of Spring on men." This turns out to consist of innocent pastoral pleasures which are contrasted to the ruinous riot of lust as a foundation for married life which exhibits "Progressive virtue" and "smiling offspring":

Delightful task! to rear the tender
thought,
And teach the young idea how to
shoot. . . .

This useful application of parental love appropriately brings the poet to his conclusion: "after the long vernal day of life" he looks forward to eternal love.

Summer is much the longest of the *Seasons* and the most diffuse; on two occasions during the summer day which is the structure of the poem the poet retires to the contemplation of large and distant subjects: at noon, while the villagers rest after their morning's healthy and produc-

tive toil, the philosophic man sits beside a waterfall and the contrast provokes a long description of the heat of the sun in the tropics, likewise contrasted to the beneficence of the sun's rays with which this poem opened. In the evening he takes a walk and for nearly two hundred lines surveys the achievements of Britannia in politics, arts, philosophy, and the like. The afternoon is interrupted by thunderstorms and the stories of a young swain whose girl was killed by lightning in his arms, and of Damon who spied his Musidora swimming in the nude. The apostrophes to God and Britannia in the poem are used in the conclusion, a hymn to "serene philosophy" which is capable of seeing through nature to the inward vision of the ideal kingdom.

Autumn is, next to *Spring*, the most conventional of poetic subjects; Thomson's originality is to follow his philosophic bent and turn it into a harvest festival, beginning with the "blessings of industry" and concluding with "a panegyric on a philosophical country life," supported by frequent allusion to "the full-adjusted harmony of things" As in the other *Seasons*, *Autumn* includes a moral tale concerning Lavinia, the gleaner, reproaches to thoughtless man for hunting and the beastly carouses that follow the hunt, charming pictures of his patron's country seat, and (by employing "fancy's rapid flight") he manages to include the inevitable grape. More original are the descriptions of migrating birds, which lead to a panegyric on Caledonia (not Britannia), meteors in the night sky, and the Indian summer of "the last autumnal day."

The earliest of the *Seasons*, *Winter*, is now the last in order and still the freshest of the four. It begins and ends in storms

of rain, floods on land and storms at sea—"Ill fares the bark with trembling wretches charged"—and contains the description of the robin redbreast added later and the best-known single vignette of the whole work. The snow scenes are the most effective. The geographic reach is interesting in the visits the poet pays, in imagination, to Lapland and Siberia. The closing passages contain the most obvious application of Thomson's philosophy:

See here thy pictur'd life; pass some
few years—
Thy flowering Spring, thy Summer's
ardent strength,
Thy sober Autumn fading into age,
And pale concluding winter comes at
last,
And shuts the scene. Ah! whither now
are fled
Those dreams of greatness? those un-
solid hopes
Of happiness? those longings after
fame?
Those restless cares? those busy bus-
tling days?
Those gay-spent, festive nights? those
veering thoughts,
Lost between good and ill, that shar'd
thy life?
All now are vanish'd! virtue sole sur-
vives,
Immortal, never-failing friend of man,
His guide to happiness on high.

The poem ends with the thought that man must appreciate, "The great eternal scheme/Involving all and in a perfect whole/Uniting," because his own view is a limited one:

The storms of wintry time will quickly
pass
And one unbounded Spring encircle
all.

SET THIS HOUSE ON FIRE

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Styron (1925-)

Time: The mid-1950's

Locale: Sambuco, Italy, and the American South
First published: 1960

Principal characters:

PETER LEVERETT, a young lawyer, the narrator
MASON FLAGG, a wealthy sensualist and sadist
CASS KINSOLVING, an American artist destroying himself with drink
POPPY, his wife
FRANCESCA RICCI, a young Italian servant
ROSEMARIE DE LAFRAMBOISE, Flagg's mistress
CELIA, another of Flagg's mistresses
LUIGI MIGLIORE, a humanistic young policeman

There are two kinds of fictional truth: the literal and the imaginative. The first is presented by writers who show us a picture of the time and the state of the world about them, and to these novelists of the social point of view—Dreiser, Lewis, Ellen Glasgow, Willa Cather—we give ungrudging recognition and belief. This, we agree, is the way people felt and thought and acted in particular times or places, and the stories these writers tell are a re-creation in art of all that is familiar in life.

But there is another group of writers—Hawthorne, Melville, James, Hemingway, Faulkner, for example—in whose work we find an atmosphere of the imaginative and the strange, a reflection of reality from angles of vision which give some new or odd dimension to the nature and condition of man. Theirs is the way of distortion, fantasy, symbol, or myth, and the tensions of their books arise from interrelationships of an identifiable social scene and a more shadowy milieu in which artifice, metaphor, irony, and ambiguity replace the picture of life unselected and unarranged with a vision of life rearranged to show it in significant form and charged with moral vigor. These are the matters we usually have in mind when we think of a writer's technique, his ability to present meaning achieved by his strategy with structure, image, and style.

William Styron's literary kinship with these latter writers who give experience an imaginative coloring and interpretation is shown by his preoccupation with

innocence and guilt, illusion and reality, violence and order, good and evil. It was precisely his ability to give dramatic form to moral issues embedded in character and conduct that made *Lie Down in Darkness* so remarkable and compelling a first novel when it appeared in 1951. That fable of lost innocence and the wisdom generated by despair remains one of the impressive books of the decade, a work in which its Virginia-born author seems to have crossed at one jump the gap between the first novel as a chronicle of one's private loves, hates, and despairs, which most young writers make their starting point, and the work which does the harder job of bringing the imagination powerfully to bear on a world of external fact. A year later Styron published *The Long Walk*, a novella dealing with military life. After that came eight years of silence, broken from time to time, however, by reports of an ambitious novel on which he was at work.

Set This House on Fire—the title comes from a passage in a sermon by John Donne—was the work in progress. Both its thematic proportions and the author's assured control of his material, aside from several minor flaws in the structure of the novel, should put to rest any interim doubts that admirers of *Lie Down in Darkness* may have had concerning Styron's literary resources or resiliency. The novel marks a considerable advance over its predecessor.

This statement is made in the knowledge that the reactions of the book's first reviewers were on the whole unfavorable.

Comments ranged from charges that the novel is somehow meretricious in theme and design, as well as turgid or pretentious in its style, to suggestions that Styron had involved his characters in a mess of such moral nastiness that some of it was likely to rub off on the reader. The interesting thing was that most of this criticism was journalistic in nature and hastily written. Perhaps Styron had waited too long to publish his second book and the reviewers had grown tired of waiting. Perhaps, too, the mood of the time has changed and the evil in the world has become so commonplace that many can now think of it only as a force of general upheaval, a matter of little importance when found among the minute particularities of our obsessed and dislocated society. Whatever the reason, Styron nevertheless had his hearing in quarters where it counted for most, in the literary periodicals and the views of serious critics to whom a novel is not news for today or this week but to be read carefully, pondered over, adequately discussed. If one puts *Set This House on Fire* beside *Lie Down in Darkness* for the sake of comparison or contrast, the verdict is likely to be in favor of William Styron and his new novel. It is a work of bold intent and powerful effect; otherwise it would not have left as strong an impression on those who criticized it most sharply.

The theme of the novel is the corruption of personality that betrays and destroys, set against a colorful Italian background. Styron, however, has ingeniously reversed the situation central to so much of Henry James's fiction: the spectacle of the innocent American of good will confronting the disillusioning and perverse morality of the European and in the process acquiring wisdom and self-knowledge. In this novel the force of evil is no product of European society or morality. It is the evil of rootless, traditionless American society transplanted to European soil, where it taints with its easy indulgence and lack of moral fiber every-

one that it touches. This is the significance of Mason Flagg's life as it is reconstructed, several years after his death, by the two men who had known him best.

The narrator is Peter Leverett, a young lawyer of Virginia ancestry, who has spent three years in Rome as a member of an overseas relief agency. About to return to America, he accepts Flagg's invitation to visit him in Sambuco, an isolated Italian village. Leverett had known Flagg in their prep school days as the handsome, spoiled son of a doting, alcoholic mother and a father too occupied with business to have much time for his wife or son. Years later Leverett had encountered Flagg in New York, a meeting that revealed once more all that was flawed and phony in his friend's character. In this section of the novel Styron may be making too much of Leverett's provincialism and Flagg's rather theatrical pursuit of vice—his smoking marijuana, the sex orgies of fabricated sin that he stages, his collection of pornography, his lies, his philosophy that the last frontier is sex. But such a view of Flagg's personality and activities is necessary if we are to understand the ambivalence in Leverett's attitude toward his former schoolmate. At the time, as he says, he saw Flagg's moral nihilism as not entirely evil because it showed a quality of imagination rare among most sons of wealthy men. Also, this early material helps to prepare us for the nightmare of Leverett's visit to Sambuco several years later.

The all-night drive Leverett makes from Rome to Sambuco becomes a journey into chaos. Beyond Naples he is involved in an accident in which an Italian is injured. His next encounter, just outside Sambuco, is with Cass Kinsolving, a young American painter making his last, despairing stand in an alcoholic flight from himself. Cass has lost the will to paint; some twist or warping of love and hate in his nature has made him drag his wife and four children halfway across Europe in his attempt to get away from his own sense of failure. Now he has

found Mason Flagg an agent for the destruction he seems to anticipate and welcome. Exhausted, nerve-shaken, Leverett arrives in Sambuco to find a motion picture company—all Flagg's acquaintances—on location there. The day ends with an orgiastic brawl revealing in all its hideous reality the nature of Flagg's hold over Cass and the perverse uses to which he puts the power he has gained over another man's mind and actions.

One of the victims of that terrible night is Francesca Ricci, a young peasant girl of great beauty and innocence in whom Cass is interested because of the simplicity of her youth and for whose father, dying of tuberculosis, he has been stealing medicines from Flagg. She is a servant in Flagg's establishment and during the night he pursues her and rapes her. Her shattered body is discovered on a mountain path next morning, shortly before Flagg's body is also found at the foot of the precipice from which he has either jumped or been thrown.

The story of that night of mystery and horror moves forward on three levels—the plane of reportage on which Leverett retells the sequence of events in which he was both spectator and participant; the flashbacks, skillfully controlled, which reveal Flagg's background and the story of his younger years; and the scenes in which Leverett and Cass Kinsolving, now living with his family in Charleston, South Carolina, and painting once more, share their knowledge of Flagg, unravel the mystery of his death, and round out the reader's understanding of what the events of that night signified for all concerned. The way in which two men meet, talk, and find something out gives *Set This House on Fire* its ultimate revelatory power as the themes of the story meet and join to support the vision of evil at the heart of the novel.

To achieve his full effect, Styron resorts to a device of dichotomy which criticism will have to resolve fully before final judgment of the novel can be made. Briefly, the writer has divided one man's experience between two men: Peter Leverett is the man who had fallen more or less under Flagg's corruptive charm when both were young and before circumstances separated them to let each go his own way; Cass Kinsolving, bedeviled, despairing, on the verge of moral as well as physical collapse, is what Leverett might have become under less happy circumstances. The clue to Styron's real meaning is so unobtrusively presented that the reader may overlook it in the scene in which it is presented. Leverett is reporting the episode in which the drunken artist is singing dirty songs and performing lewd antics for the amusement of Flagg's guests. Suddenly, as he says, the situation becomes vividly clear: Mason holds Cass in the same kind of guilty loyalty that Leverett had known as a boy and from which he had only narrowly escaped. Whether this division is justified in terms of character or structure is a matter of doubt. Certainly it adds to our understanding of Styron's novel, but it does so at some cost to the inner harmony of the book.

Aside from this possible flaw in the otherwise beautifully achieved virtuosity of the novel, the novel is a work of considerable dramatic force and imaginative truth on a variety of modern themes: the corruption of power, the perversion of good, the burden of responsibility, the loss of self. *Set This House on Fire* presents unsparingly but compassionately the causes and configuration of man's guilt and the struggle of innocence and self to survive in the fragmented life of our time.

THE SHADOW OF NIGHT

Type of work: Poetry

Author: George Chapman (c. 1559-1634)

First published: 1594

The Shadow of Night, George Chapman's first extant published work, has come to be thought of as the spiritual father of the Metaphysical school of English poetry. The book includes two separate long poems: "Hymnus in Noctem," and "Hymnus in Cynthiam." Both are highly allegorical and difficult by reason of their complex and allusive style. Two main themes of both poems are the celebration of intellect and the lamentation of worldly injustice. Many scholars have assumed that *The Shadow of Night* was a poetic manifesto of a group of poets and intellectuals (including Chapman, Sir Walter Raleigh, Christopher Marlowe, and several others) who were characterized by a desire to push reason and science to the point of atheism. Shakespeare is said to have satirized this group in *Love's Labor's Lost*, and to have called it "the school of night." Despite the fact that these men knew one another and undoubtedly shared many unusual ideas, the school of night as such is probably the invention of modern scholars whose conclusions are based on some striking but inadequate evidence. Chapman's *The Shadow of Night* should be read as an expression of his own attitudes and early poetic interests; that is, it should be read on its own terms.

Chapman was a believer in the Platonic doctrine that true poetry is divinely inspired; and he was also convinced that most men of his day were incapable of achieving such inspiration or, for that matter, of understanding it. They were light-minded and also ill-educated, he thought. Chapman believed himself to be one of the inspired elite who through inspiration gained insight into higher truth. He was essentially an intellectual poet, and his major poetic problem was to translate his abstract ideas into directly

apprehensible poetic feeling; much of the difficulty we still find in Chapman's poetry is a product of his trying to re-create his thought as feeling through poetry. His thought is "dark" and to a large extent non-rational (not irrational), and thus his poetry is, in appearance at least, dark and non-rational. Moreover, a certain degree of darkness and mystery, Chapman felt, was necessary to true poetry. Those who are incapable of penetrating its mystery, he claimed, would be incapable of understanding it even if it were explained to them.

Chapman's poetic, intellectual, and moral position is outlined in his brief dedication to *The Shadow of Night*, "To my Dear and Most Worthy Friend, Master Mathew Roydon." Only an exceeding rapture of delight in the pursuit of knowledge, says Chapman, can enable a man to endure the difficulties of true and deep study. Only thus motivated may a man hope to overcome ignorance and achieve judgment. Since this is true, how ridiculous it is to see average, passion-driven men who read books merely for delight and who take as the basis of judgment the fancies of the great and pass critical judgment on the work of true seekers after knowledge. How foolish it is, he continues, for such men who look on literature as a pretty toy to think that they can understand the "skill" (art) of one who learns the secrets of Skill through making his soul the heavenly familiar of Skill. Most men are full of the immoral world and the greed for wealth; thus they cannot hope to understand the truth, which has nothing to do with such worldly things.

The first of the two poems that make up *The Shadow of Night* is "Hymnus in Noctem," a 403-line poem addressed to Night, the "Great Goddess" to whose

throne the earth is an altar smoking with the "fumes of sighs and the fires of grief." Night is mistress of "silence, study, ease, and sleep," and is the day of deep students. Light, on the other hand, is the master of shallow minds, the corrupt rule of organized society, and daily routine. The poet asks Night to inspire him and either to give seas to his eyes so that he may "weep the shipwreck of the world," or to let soft sleep bind his senses and release his "working soul" so that it can attain its highest pitch and control "the court of skill" to reach "all secrets." Then will "my words unfold," says the poet, "to break the labyrinth of every ear."

Chapman goes on to ask Night why she let order appear in the once formless chaos that existed in the beginning. When chaos was put in order, and when light was brought into being, soul and form were made distinct and were separated; thus wickedness came into the world, for then form could be separated from spirit (as it could not be before, when all things were evenly and interpenetratingly intermixed). Now, in the daylight world where men frantically search for wealth and power, a "stepdame Night of mind," clings to man instead of the sweet and peaceful Night of primal darkness and chaos: disorder is in the soul instead of the universe. Building on this paradox of the Light to be found for the soul in the blackness of Night, and the Darkness to be found for the soul in the light of Day, Chapman goes on to protest against the wickedness and perversion of the world.

Among the other subjects he treats is the role of the true poet. Such a poet, who can see through the illusions of the present and who can comprehend the true virtue that existed when the universe was young, can create from the glowing "coals" of his "more-than-human" soul, poetry from which other men can learn virtue. "Hymnus in Noctem" reaches its climax in an apostrophe to men who understand the wickedness of the world to

fall down before night and join with the poet in weeping their souls into felicity and to fall into sleep and dream of the virtuous things not seen in the world: "If these be dreams, even so are all things else." "No pen," says Chapman, "can anything eternal write/That is not steeped in humor of the Night." He closes with a prayer that Night and Night's wild entourage rule "till virtue flourish in the light of light."

The second poem in *The Shadow of Night*, "Hymnus in Cynthia," is longer and in some respects more complicated. It is addressed to Cynthia, or the moon, who is called "the Night's fair soul" and who is seen as the force that controls all things, including fate. Part of the allegorical aspects of the poem relates to Queen Elizabeth, who was during her reign frequently addressed in poetry as Cynthia or Diana, the virginal goddess of the moon.

The poet begins with an apostrophe begging Cynthia to ascend her chariot and "make earth admire/Thy old swift changes" and let her eternal beauty scorch the wings of time that he may fall and "beat himself to death before he rise." Here again we see Chapman opposing the idea of Night—his symbol of eternal things (paradoxically objectified in the changing but virginally pure moon)—to the day and light and sun, his symbols of time, and the finite, and imperfection.

Beginning with Line 120, Chapman builds a complex invocation to his muse to infuse his soul with ecstasy that he may rise above himself properly to glorify Cynthia in the argument that is to be the theme of the major part of the poem. At the end of this invocation, Chapman warns off those who cannot understand his meaning. "Judgement shall display, to purest eyes/With ease, the bowels of these mysteries." The next three hundred lines are taken up with a complicated allegorical fantasy recounting Cynthia's hunting. The poem ends with a violent prayer that Cynthia, the embodiment of purity, will let her power be manifest in

disasters and fierceness in the world so that the wonders of her power will be vis-

ible to all and that she will "forever live the Planets Queen."

SHELBURNE ESSAYS

Type of work: Literary criticism
Author: Paul Elmer More (1864-1937)
First published: 1904-1921

The eleven volumes of Paul Elmer More's *Shelburne Essays*, written over a long period of years and for various occasions, grew chiefly out of book reviews. More was an erudite and intelligent critic who has come to be considered a "lesser" critic because he was primarily a moralist and was only secondarily concerned with art. However, he was an extremely careful and perceptive reader. His standards were high, and he gave no undeserved praise; he would praise any deserving part of a writer's work even though he felt an antipathy for the rest of it. He believed in character, discipline, and responsibility, and he searched for these qualities in literature in addition to aesthetic ones. His style is discursive, but often paragraphs that seem to be rambling come together to make a point with force and clarity. He avoided the distasteful, the sensual, and the weak, and sought a literary standard that was essentially religious. His entire life was a slow but steady submission to religious dogma. He felt that literature divorced from life is an empty pursuit and that an honest search for meaning must inevitably lead one to a simple theistic faith. Because he looked to the classics and tradition for standards, he judged writers according to their relation to the classics and historical trends. Such literary standards, he felt, were enduring and represented man's total experience. More believed that a critic's contribution is as great as a creative artist's, and he quoted Nietzsche to the effect that valuing is creating.

Among his essays on English writers, one of the best is that on Sir Thomas Browne, regarded by More as a truly honest man. Browne had a respect for

both religious traditionalism and scientific rationalism. He was by intellect progressive; by temperament reactionary. To him the whole mass of Nature was a mystery and the visible world but a picture of the invisible. More was particularly sympathetic with these ideas. In this essay he also demonstrates his intense interest in language and verbal felicities.

His essay on Christina Rossetti illustrates his insistence on praising that which is worthy and his ideas as to women's "place." He found her poetry refined and exquisite but lacking in artistic restraint. She bent under adversity but endured with patience. More compares her with Elizabeth Barrett Browning and finds her superior in that she stayed within women's realm: earthly love and spiritual love. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, on the other hand, ventured into the sphere of masculine poets: reform, scholarship, and politics. More was interested in the limitations, which he felt sure existed, that distinguish a woman writer from a man. He felt that Mrs. Browning thought of woman not according to a separate standard but according to a common standard for human nature. Christina Rossetti thought of woman according to a separate standard. More points out that the Bible draws an unalterable distinction between the position, duties, and privileges of men and women.

More traced clearly the progress of George Gissing as a writer, from his early years when he felt that art must express misery because misery was the keynote of modern life, to his later ones when he felt that art should express a zest for life. Preferring him in one respect at least to Dickens, More believed that Gissing

showed the inner life of his characters which he himself felt, whereas Dickens portrayed his characters with humor but from the outside, failing to identify himself with them. However, More said that in the end Dickens was the greatest artist because he stood above his material while Gissing did not. Gissing was no friend to the people, but put all his reliance on God, an attitude to which More was sympathetic.

Romanticism was abhorrent to More. To him it signified the infinitely craving personality and the complete usurpation of emotion over reason. He compared it to a fever, a disease. He distrusted the unchecked imagination. As a result he found Shelley to be self-centered, morally self-complacent, and indifferent to the fate of those around him. His was the voice of enthusiasm and unreasoned emotion, offering vague hope but no content or understanding. More felt it was doubtful whether or not the same man could admire both Shelley and Milton.

Among the American New England writers More felt particularly at home, the Puritan attitude being more congenial to him than any other. He wrote with clarity and perception of the development of the American literary imagination and of the forces that operated to make it what it was: a fierce struggle with nature, traditional imported superstition, and an intense spiritual vision. These combined to form what More called "character." He saw the Salem mania and the visions of evil as resulting from the colonists' confrontation with the forces of nature which in their wildness and savage-filled darkness were far different from the countryside of England. Just as the colonists represented only a part of the English population, they brought with them only a part of the English literary tradition. Their sermons and their poetry were simple but often overwhelming in their sincerity and intensity. More felt that their serenity of spirit gave them a particular kind of beauty and tenderness. It was this "character" that saved

Emerson and Thoreau from the romantic excesses of German Transcendentalism and gave such poets as Longfellow and Whittier their simplicity and strength.

Benjamin Franklin was, More said, the typical American. Although he had the most comprehensive mind of the eighteenth century, Franklin's writing was directed toward practical rather than literary ends. He was completely absorbed in the present, was witty, versatile, and efficient. But his imagination lacked depth, and he skimmed lightly over all religious matters. Why he did so puzzled More; he saw in Franklin's Deistic views a basic lack in his character.

The poet Philip Freneau was an interesting writer to More, who felt there was a lack of sympathy on the part of the public for this man who spent so much of his time and energy on political writing. Had he had a more sympathetic environment More felt that he would have developed into a fine poet. As it was, he was honored in England, particularly as he anticipated the Romantics.

Among More's finest essays are those on Hawthorne and Poe. He sees three stages of development in New England. First there was the religious intolerance of Cotton Mather, then the imaginative isolation of Hawthorne, and lastly a nervous impotence. In the first period writers sought to suppress all worldly emotions; in the second they made of the solitude which followed suppression a tragic symbol; and in the third they portrayed people in whom all action has dried up and who are inarticulate. Thus both Hawthorne and Poe's visions are rooted deep in American history. Their preoccupations with the weird, the unearthly, and the isolated derive from the innermost core of the national consciousness. They both express a stern and indomitable moral character. Freneau began the transition from the terror of superstition to the haunting symbolism of the two later writers, who were constantly concerned with decay and the effects of guilt.

More found that one truth runs like a thread through all the short stories and novels of Hawthorne: the penalty of sin is solitude. In his work there can be found every form of solitude known in human existence. Hawthorne spoke of himself as being locked away from any real human contact, and although he wished desperately to break out, he could not. Thus More wondered why it is that although Hawthorne is not shallow and is constantly concerned with human problems which he himself deeply felt, he moves no one to tears. More concluded that possibly this circumstance is so because the full meaning in Hawthorne's writing lies too deep for tears.

Poe was not a favorite of More's because he did not work with ideas but with facts and the dissection of sensation; Also, he was not concerned with moral truth. This, to More, was a serious lack, but he points out that while Poe was morbid emotionally he was never morbid morally. More approved of Poe's criticism and rhapsodical poetry. In "The Bells," More felt, Poe had achieved the mathematical finish of Bach or any other master of counterpoint.

The poets Longfellow and Whittier have been underestimated, according to More, though they both operate on a lower plane of the imagination than many other poets. In Whittier he found the

charm of the simple, sturdy New Englander. Longfellow's popularity he attributed to the fact that he required nothing on the part of readers who enjoy rhythm and sentimentality. However, his value as a poet lies in his sonnets, which are largely neglected and are among the best in the English language.

More felt that Thoreau's distinction lay in the fact that what other people preached, he lived. He excelled in detailed, precise writing and had all his experience to draw on. He was only a shadow of Emerson and had little or no creative imagination such as Hawthorne's, but he had a tremendous sense of individualism and expectation. More said life and the world were always morning with him.

More thought that Emersonianism was Romanticism rooted in Puritan divinity. He thought Emerson had harmonious principles that worked for him, but no philosophical system that could be useful to the many. For More, Emerson epitomized the purity and serenity of the New England mind and soul.

Paul Elmer More was an austere, often astringent critic. Despite his limitations he must be respected for the vigor of his convictions, his respect for literature as a moral force, and his attempt to trace a native, shaping tradition at work in American writing.

THE SHEPHEARDES CALENDAR

Type of work: Pastoral poem

Author: Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599)

First published: 1579

Principal characters:

COLIN CLOUT, the greatest of the shepherd poets

HOBBINOL, his friend

THENOT, a wise old shepherd

CUDDIE, a young shepherd, an aspiring poet

A new age in English poetry began with the anonymous publication in 1579 of *The Shepheardes Calendar*, by Edmund Spenser. The form of the work, a collection of twelve pastoral poems, indi-

cates Spenser's poetic ambitions; the aspiring Renaissance poet was expected to imitate Vergil by first composing eclogues as a kind of apprenticeship, then attempting his magnum opus, the epic. From the

time of Theocritus, three hundred years before the birth of Christ, the pastoral world had been pictured as a refuge by writers chafing under the problems of a complex urban society; classical poets also established a literary precedent by using the pastoral for allegorical political satire.

Spenser's eclogues have themes familiar from the time of Vergil: the song contest, the elegy, the lament of the scorned lover, criticism of corruption in Church and State. However, much of the lasting value of *The Shepheardes Calendar* is in its language, the skillfully varied verse forms, the rich imagery of some parts and the direct rustic simplicity of others. Spenser does not here achieve the sustained brilliance of works like his "Epithalamion," but he shows the potential of English as a language of poetry, paving the way for his own later work and that of his great contemporaries, Shakespeare, Sidney, Jonson, Donne, and others.

The framework of *The Shepheardes Calendar*, which celebrates each of the twelve months in a separate poem, gives unity to the diversity of subjects and tones in the whole work; the changing seasons themselves provide continuity. Colin Clout, the shepherd poet, who appears in "January," "June," and "December" and is present in the discussion of other characters throughout the poem, provides yet another link. He ages with the passing year; a mournful young lover in the first poem, he is a melancholy middle-aged poet in the last.

The twelve eclogues reveal many facets of Spenser's talents. In "January," written in six-line rhyming stanzas, Colin, forlorn and rejected by his beloved Rosalind, compares his mood with the wintry landscape:

Thou barrein ground, whome winters
wrath hath wasted,
Art made a mirror to behold my plight:
Whilome thy fresh spring flowrd, and
after hasted
Thy summer proud with daffadillies
dight,
And now is come thy winters stormy
state,

Thy mantle marred wherein thou
maskedst late.

At the end of this poem Colin breaks his shepherd's pipes and resolves to write no more poetry.

Spenser uses the rhyming pentameter couplet in his February eclogue to achieve a conversational flow like that of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. An impudent young shepherd, Cuddie, complains of the wintry blasts to the elderly Thenot, and he scorns the old man's philosophical view that a man must learn to endure the long succession of misfortunes that this world brings and concern himself only with the safety of his flock. Tired of Cuddie's rudeness, Thenot tells the fable of an old oak and a proud briar bush. The briar persuades a farmer to cut down the tree to show off its own beauty. All is well until winter comes; the briar then dies without the protection of the oak against wind and frost. Cuddie is unmoved by this parable of youth and age and breaks it off abruptly.

"March," written in still another poetic mode, is a charming dialogue between two young shepherds who welcome spring as a time for love. The idiom of the poem is classical; Flora brings the spring flowers, and the downward progress of Phoebus, the sun, ends the conversation. The central section is a description of Thomalin's encounter with Cupid, modeled on the pastoral poems of Theocritus and the works of Roman elegiac poets such as Tibullus and Propertius. Thomalin tells a friend how, while he was hunting on one shepherds' holiday, he heard a rustling in the bushes:

With that sprung forth a naked swain
With spotted wings like peacock's train,
And laughing lope to a tree,
His gylden quiver at his back,
And silver bow, which was but slack,
Which lightly he bent at me.

The "April" eclogue has been considered the best of all. In it Thenot finds Hobbinal grieving over the sorrows of his friend Colin Clout and mourning that his unrequited love has deprived all the

shepherds of his poems. Thenot asks Hobbinol to recite one of Colin's verses to while away the hours as their flocks graze, and he complies with an ode on "Fair Elisa, queen of shepherds all," an unmistakable tribute to Elizabeth I. The poem heralds the golden age of Elizabethan poetry both in its pervasive classicism and in its fresh natural imagery. Colin calls upon the muses, the graces, the sun, and the moon as he begins his praise of the daughter of Pan, the shepherds' god and Syrinx, then he describes her beauty:

See, where she sits upon the grassie
green,
(O seemly sight!)
Yclad in scarlet, like a maiden queen
And ermines white.
Upon her head a cremosin coronet,
With damask leaves and daffadillies set:
Bayleaves between,
And primroses green,
Embellish the sweet violet.

Thenot, convinced of Colin's gifts by this recitation, comments on the folly of giving in to love.

The first of the political allegories is "May," a discussion between Piers and Palinode of the corruption of the shepherds who neglect their sheep to seek their own profit; the poem is a bitter condemnation of the priests of the time. Palinode, who is discouraged because he cannot participate in the spring revels of other shepherds, asks why the good shepherd, the clergyman, should not have a right to the pleasures others enjoy. Piers, who is more serious than his companion, speaks at length about the responsibility of those who care for the flocks. They must forsake worldly concerns and trust in God for their living if they are to set a good example for their sheep. He disagrees with Palinode's contention that there is no reason for shepherds to live less pleasantly than anyone else, and, to illustrate the dangers of association with the wicked, he tells the familiar fable of the innocent young kid who is duped and carried off by a smooth-talking fox.

In "June," Colin Clout returns to admire the peaceful life his friend Hobbinol has made for himself in the fields. Hobbinol praises Colin's poetry, but the latter disavows the possession of any great talents:

But piping low in shade of lowly grove
I play to please my self, all be it ill.

He is content to serve Pan, the god of shepherds; he makes no claims to be worthy of the patronage of the Muses. Because his poetic pleas are not powerful enough to pierce the heart of Rosalind, he is forever doomed. He entreats the "gentle shepherds":

Tell the lass, whose flower is woxe a
weed,
And faultless faith is turned to faith-
less fear,
That she the truest shepherds heart
made bleed
That lives on earth, and loved her most
dear.

"July," which jogs along in alternate four-stress and three-stress lines, returns to the theme of May, criticism of the contemporary clergy. Thomalin contrasts the simplicity and unpretentiousness of the life of the first shepherd, Christ, and "the brethren twelve that kept yfere the flocks of mighty Pan" with the lavish living of the purple-clad priests of his own day. He has recently been shocked to hear of their way of life:

For Palinode (if thou him ken)
Rode late on pilgrimage
To Rome, (if such be Rome) and then
He saw thilke misusage.
For shepherds, said he, there doen lead,
As lords done other where;
Their sheep han crusts, and they the
bread;
The chips, and they the cheer.

The song contest of "August" is closely modeled on one of Vergil's eclogues, even to the conclusion that the two contestants are equally good and that each deserves the promised prize. Willy and Perigot contribute alternate lines to a rollicking

love lyric, designed to cure Perigot of his melancholy mood, occasioned by an unhappy love affair. When they finish, Cuddie, their judge, recites for them one of Colin Clout's doleful laments to his Rosalind, which provides an interesting contrast in style and tone with the earlier song.

In "September," Diggon Davie returns to the country with news of the miseries he experienced on his travels in the cities, where he found everything filled with greed and corruption. The language of the poem is harsh, and the mood is deeply pessimistic. Spenser sees little hope for the Church; when the shepherds have sold their souls to the devil, their sheep inevitably suffer.

The poet shifts his attention from the state of the world to the state of poetry in "October," as Cuddie questions the value of writing. Even when his work is good, it seems to bring him little reward. Piers, his older, wiser friend answers, "The praise is better than the price." He has faith in the didactic effects of poetry:

O what an honor is it, to restrain
The lust of lawless youth with good advice,
Or prick them forth with pleasance of thy vein,
Whereto thou list their trained wills entice!

He counsels Cuddie to turn to epic, to sing of wars and princes. This kind of poetry, the young man replies, might have been possible in Augustan Rome, where Vergil found willing patrons, but in the modern age there is no climate for poetry. Colin Clout alone might have soared toward the heavens in his verse, but he is the prisoner of love. Piers, a good platonist, maintains that love has, in fact, freed the poet, given him wings to lift him up out of the "loathsome mire."

"November" is in the popular tradition of the pastoral elegy, which reached its height in Milton's *Lycidas*. Colin Clout's lament for Dido, a beautiful lady who

died young, moves in the conventional pattern. The poet speaks first out of deep distress, calling on the muses and all nature to mourn with him. Then the mood changes, and he rejoices to know that the lady "is installed now in heaven's height," where "lives she with the blessed gods in bliss."

The final poem is another of Colin's long meditations. He reminisces first in a Wordsworthian fashion about the care-free days of his youth, the spring of his life, when he climbed trees in search of ravens' eggs and shook nuts from walnut trees, and when he learned from the good old shepherd Wrenock the art of song. Then his summer years brought the painful heat of love, which withered his promising poetic talents:

So now my year draws to his latter term,
My spring is spent, my summer burnt up quite,
My harvest hastes to stir up Winter stern,
And bids him claim with rigorous rage his right.

He now finds himself old and ready to leave the world, and he concludes with a farewell to his art, his flocks, and his friends.

The Shepheardes Calendar is the manifesto of a serious poet, concerned with every aspect of life, public and private, and prepared to transform politics, as well as love, into art. The wide sweep of *The Faerie Queene* is foreshadowed in the eclogues. In them Spenser shaped a satisfactory poetic language for himself, deliberately using archaic expressions in an attempt to enrich the vocabulary of his time and to convey a sense of rustic speech. He drew upon the works of his classical masters for imagery and themes and incorporated within his poem the particular charms of the medieval English lyrics and the satirical wit and conversational tone of Chaucer.

SHIP OF FOOLS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Katherine Anne Porter (1890-)

Time: August 22-September 17, 1931

Locale: The North German Lloyd S.A. *Vera*, at sea

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

SHIP'S CAPTAIN THIELE, a pompous autocrat

DR. SCHUMANN, the ship's doctor

MARY TREADWELL, an American divorcee returning to Paris

DAVID SCOTT, a young American painter

JENNY BROWN, his mistress, also an artist

WILLIAM DENNY, a young chemical engineer from Texas

HERR KARL BAUMGARTNER, a lawyer and an alcoholic

FRAU GRETA BAUMGARTNER, his wife

HANS BAUMGARTNER, their small son

HERR PROFESSOR HUTTEN, a retired teacher, a pedant

FRAU KÄTHE HUTTEN, his wife

FRAÜLEIN LIZZI SPOCKENKIEKER, a coquettish spinster

HERR SIEGFRIED RIEBER, a trade magazine publisher, violently anti-Semitic

HERR WILLIAM FREYTAG, a young German engineer married to a Jewish wife

HERR KARL GLOCKEN, a hunchback

HERR WILIBALD GRAF, a dying religious fanatic

JOHANN, his rebellious nephew and nurse

HERR JULIUS LÖWENTHAL, a Jewish manufacturer of religious art objects

FRAU RITTERSDORF, widowed during World War I

FRAU OTTO SCHMITT, a widow taking her husband's body to Germany for burial

HERR HEINRICH LUTZ, a Swiss hotelkeeper

FRAU LUTZ, his wife

ELSA LUTZ, their frumpish, frustrated daughter

LA CONDESA, a Spanish noblewoman and revolutionist deported from Cuba

ARNE HANSEN, a bitter, passionate, violent Swede

AMPARO,

PASTORA,

CONCHA,

LOLA,

PEPE,

PANCHO,

MANOLO, and

TITO, members of a zarzuela troupe returning to Spain from Mexico

RIC (ARMANDO) and

RAC (DOLORES), Lola's six-year-old twins

SIX CUBAN MEDICAL STUDENTS, "Les Camelots de la Cucaracha"

ECHEGARAY, a Basque woodcarver drowned while saving a dog from the sea

FATHER CARILLO and

FATHER GARZA, Mexican priests

A HONEYMOONING COUPLE, Mexicans from Guadalajara

A RADICAL POLITICAL AGITATOR

The stories of Katherine Anne Porter are refractions of the visible world obliquely presented, works of observed reality and moral subtlety by a writer who has viewed the life of our time at close range but without commitment to its mass programs or dialectics. Years ago she made clear her position as a person and an artist faced by the spectacle of man obsessed by needs and fears of the inner self and shaken from without by the upheavals of his imperfect society. Commenting on the short stories in *Flowering Judas*, her first book, she wrote in the preface to the Modern Library edition of 1940 that her stories were parts of a design still incomplete but representative of vision and statement she had been able to achieve in a period of world crisis and disturbance. She added that her purpose as a writer was to trace to their sources the particular incidents of particular lives and to examine the scope and meaning of man's failure to live in the society he has created.

Such a statement could stand unchanged as the introductory note to *Ship of Fools*, for in the long-awaited and full-scale novel of Miss Porter's career we have one more compelling instance of the earned knowledge which has solicited her attention and claimed her energies in fiction, the attempt on her part to confront the mystery of being, to uncover among the uncertainties, frustrations, and defeats of men's lives the causes of mankind's moral and spiritual failure, to find in the fabric of human society the flaw through which the concentration camp and the gas chamber entered history and gave the world a new dimension of bestiality and evil. The result of her labors is a book, rich in its variety of incident and character-drawing, in which the writer's outsgights and insights are brought imaginatively to bear upon a circumscribed complex of personal relationships in such fashion as to point to something universal and common to us all. As an example of structure and statement *Ship of Fools* functions on more than one level of reso-

nance and meaning. Within limits of space and time determined by a sea voyage aboard the ship *Vera*, which is Miss Porter's image of the human community, it is a political novel, a moral allegory, and a work of social criticism.

It is also a book with a history of its own. In 1931, Katherine Anne Porter was a passenger on a German ship bound from Veracruz, Mexico, to Bremerhaven, Germany. It was her first trip to Europe, and her account of that experience, a travel journal in the form of a letter to Caroline Gordon, a fellow writer, became the starting point of her novel. In Switzerland a year later, while the impressions of the voyage were still fresh in her mind, she read Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff*, a 1494 rhymed satire in which the writer pictured the world as a ship carrying its human cargo of fools and madmen toward eternity. The image of the world as a ship, already old when Brant used it, provided an appropriate metaphor for the kind of story beginning to shape itself in Miss Porter's imagination. First called *The Promised Land*, it later became *No Safe Harbor* and then *Ship of Fools*, all the while expanding under the dramatic and symbolic power of its theme. Originally it was planned as a fourth novella in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, but as it outgrew its intended proportions it became the long novel on which, from time to time, Miss Porter was reported at work. Years passed, a few short sections appeared in magazines, but the book itself seemed no nearer completion. Announced for publication half a dozen times and then withdrawn, it became the most famous unpublished novel since James Joyce's *Work in Progress*.

Then, after twenty years of intermittent writing, the book appeared—497 pages long, handsomely bound, with a lavish cast of more than fifty cabin passengers and ship's officers, not counting 876 unfortunate souls in the steerage and a doted on, seasick bulldog named Bébé, all embarked on a voyage from Veracruz to Bremerhaven between August 22 and

September 17, 1931. The completed novel stands as a testament to time's insights and the craftsmanship of a dedicated artist.

In construction, *Ship of Fools* is divided into three sections: Part I, Embarkation; Part II, High Sea; Part III, The Harbors. Each is introduced by an epigraph relating its action to the larger thematic design of the novel, the first a line from Baudelaire, "*Quand partons-nous vers le bonheur?*" (When are we setting forth toward happiness?); the second a phrase from a song by Brahms, "*Kein Haus, Keine Heimat*" (No house, no home); and the third an incomplete quotation from St. Paul's injunction to the Hebrews, "For here we have no continuing city. . . ." Miss Porter's meaning is plain: man is constantly setting out in search of happiness but discovers, instead, that he has no earthly house or spiritual homeland and that his city is not eternal but threatened with destruction. The title of the novel comes from Brant's fifteenth century satire. In a brief foreword, Miss Porter declared that she is a passenger on that ship. By implication, so are we.

Although the title is symbolic, the story is rooted in recognizably human terms. A writer of sensuous detail and coloring, Miss Porter builds her fictional world as solidly as our five senses recreate the world about us. The *Vera* is a real ship; the characters make the book. The novel contains no more plot than we would find in real life. Instead, the writer achieves her effects by skillful handling of parallels and contrasts—order and disorder, power and weakness, love and hate, deception and self-deception, individual and mass—shown in human relationships that are comic, abrasive, damaging, deadly. People meet; they react to or upon one another; life is illuminated and truth revealed. In the process a great deal is laid bare for our understanding.

The characters represent a varied cross section drawn from different nations and races, and the arrangement by which

they are presented to us is hierarchal. At the top stands Captain Thiele, the symbol of authority and order for which, as he believes, German culture stands. A petty, pompous tyrant living by rules and regulations, he expects everyone else to do the same. At the bottom of the scale are the steerage passengers, Spanish laborers and their families being returned to their homes after the Cuban sugar crop has failed. Miserable in their squalor and hopelessness, they represent the blind, stubborn determination of mankind to stay alive at any price. If they cannot prevail, they can multiply. Seven children are born during the voyage. As some of the workmen disembark at Santa Cruz de Tenerife a boy boasts that they are now more than when they started, and one of the new mothers shouts triumphantly that the newborn are all men. In between are the passengers and crew, all members of the middle class and the middle path in life. From time to time they feel the weight of the captain's authority from above—with repressed hate on the part of Jewish Herr Löwenthal, with eager submission by gentle Frau Schmitt—or peer down toward the steerage deck at the wretched creatures below.

Because the *Vera* is a North German Lloyd vessel, most of the passengers are Germans returning to the Fatherland after years of residence in Mexico or brief business trips there. These include Herr Rieber, a gross lecher and Jew-baiter and the publisher of a trade magazine; Fräulein Lizzi Spöckenkieker, the cackling, vulgar owner of several dress shops; Professor and Frau Hutten, who lavish all the affection of their lonely lives on their pet bulldog; Frau Rittersdorf, who keeps a diary in which she records her impressions of those who fail to measure up to the standards of the master race; Frau Schmitt, a pathetic, helpless widow; Herr Baumgartner, an alcoholic lawyer and his family; Herr Graf, a dying mystic who believes himself gifted with the power of healing; Johann, his rebellious nephew and nurse; Herr Karl Glocken, a hunch-

back who has sold his newsstand in Mexico City; Herr Julius Löwenthal, a sullen Jewish manufacturer of religious relics; and Herr Wilhelm Freytag, a young oil executive secretly haunted by the fact that his wife is Jewish.

Four Americans are making the voyage. Mrs. Treadwell, recently divorced, has no real purpose in her life; for her the promise of the past has been dimmed by the contradiction between hope and memory. William Denny is a young Texan engineer obsessed by status and sex. His guide in life is *Recreational Aspects of Sex and Mental Prophylaxis—A True Guide to Happiness*, and he judges the world by the standards of Brownsville, where a man knew who he was and everyone knew his place and stayed in it. David Scott and Jenny Brown, young artists and lovers, are traveling in separate cabins; throughout the voyage they approach each other with gestures of tenderness, only to be driven apart by the urge to possess or be possessed. With that hardness of heart often exhibited by the innocent and immature, they give only hurt where understanding and compassion are needed.

Other passengers are a Mexican bride and groom, absorbed in each other and remote from the life on shipboard; two priests; a raddled Spanish Condesa being deported from Cuba because of her revolutionary political activities; Herr Lutz, a Swiss hotel manager, his wife, and their frumpish daughter; Arne Hansen, a young Swede who finds in lust relief from his existential despair; six boisterous medical students from Cuba calling themselves "Les Camelots de la Cucaracha"; and a zarzuela troupe of Spanish singers and dancers. These entertainers are the most sinister of the travelers; the women are harlots, the men are pimps, and all are thieves. With them are two children, twins named Ric and Rac, creatures of natural depravity who become agents of even greater evil when they throw overboard the Condesa's stolen pearls and later hurl into the sea the Hut-

ten's dog Bébé.

Mediating among the groups is Dr. Schumann, the ship's doctor, a man of warm and candid impulses beneath his detached professional manner. A Catholic, a scholar, a man of reason, he stands for the best in the German humanistic tradition. But he sees himself as old and tired. Aware of his serious heart condition, he knows that he is returning to Germany to die. During the voyage he and the pathetic Condesa strip each other of pose. Although their encounter provides an opportunity for a love that makes no demands, imposes no obligations, he withdraws from emotional involvement. His training is too strong. Unable to dare enough, he remains the humane physician in his attempt to ease her addiction to drugs. The loss of illusions in the relationship of gentle Dr. Schumann and La Condesa is the most revealing and rending of all the unmasking that takes place aboard the *Vera*.

Miss Porter sets her stage with great tact and skill, and almost everything that happens during the voyage is prefigured in image or incident against the sultry, violent background of Veracruz as the passengers prepare to embark. The screeching, chattering, yelping, spitting encounter of a parrot, a monkey, a dog, and a cat prepares us for the knowledge that Fräulein Spöckenkieker persists in shrilling like a peafowl; Herr Rieber's face is like a pig's pink snout; David Scott resembles a willful, high-spirited, blooded horse; a ranting political agitator has a voice like a bull's, and the women of the zarzuela company sound like a flock of quarreling birds. The morning newspaper contains a photograph of an Indian servant boy, accidentally killed in the bombing of the Swedish consulate, lying with one hand resting on his spilled entrails. Refused alms, a beggar woman pinches Mrs. Treadwell and leaves a discolored bruise on her arm. The Huttens feed sandwiches to their fat dog while an emaciated, ragged Indian sits nearby. When they leave he ignores their aban-

doned food, but a horribly maimed beggar crawls across the square, guided blindly by his sense of smell, and gulps the sandwiches. Some armed men appear suddenly and hustle the impassive Indian away. Each of these details, presented so casually and with apparent irrelevance, points in some manner to the shape of things to come.

At the center of the novel stands a more compelling image fusing character, action, and theme, an incident viewed by Jenny Brown through the windows of a bus several years before: a glimpse of Indians surrounding a man and woman joined as if in physical, death-dealing combat, the man grasping a knife, the woman, bloody from her wounds, beating him over the head with a stone. Briefly seen, the incident left in Jenny's mind an impression of human cruelty and violence highlighted under a brilliant sun.

One by one, in their encounters with one another, Miss Porter shows her people locked in a similar struggle between involvement and detachment within the cage of self. Here in microcosm is the world man has made, ridden by prejudice, filled with selfishness and greed, stupidly cruel, morally lost. Among so much, it is difficult to single out particular incidents that test these people by their participation in the common concerns of humanity, their moral flexibility, their humaneness of being. Most fail in their moment of crisis. After a disturbance in the steerage Captain Thiele orders all tools and weapons taken away from the Cuban laborers. A Basque wood-carver, Echegaray, who makes his living by carving small animals, weeps when his knife is confiscated. Jenny Brown and David Scott discover hate in love and love in hate. Hansen, the victim of sterile lust, buys the favors of Amparo, one of the Spanish dancers. Arrogant William Denny is frustrated in his pursuit of another, Pastora. When Ric and Rac throw the Hutten's bulldog over the side, Echegaray jumps into the sea and is drowned while trying to rescue the ani-

mal. During his funeral, which causes another riot in the steerage, three great whales appear spouting on the horizon. Frau Hutten finds the courage to interrupt her pompous husband's flow of words and contradict him. After Mrs. Treadwell innocently reveals Freytag's confidence that his wife is Jewish, the young man is banished from the captain's table and the other diners close ranks against the outcast, the silence unbroken except for the sound of people lapping soup, motion suspended except for rising and dipping heads, on every face an expression of complacent unity. But the truly revealing episode is the mock fiesta staged by the zarzuela troupe, ostensibly to honor the captain but in reality to mock his authority, to parody the other passengers, and to turn the occasion into a *Walpurgisnacht* of weakness, pride, greed, and folly. Hansen breaks a bottle over Herr Reiber's head. When drunken Denny tries to force his way into Mrs. Treadwell's cabin, she discovers in herself unsuspected compulsions toward violence and beats him insensible with the heel of her evening slipper. The irony is that after their shattering experiences the passengers regain their composure, adjust their lives, and remain wrapped in their illusions of self. Only Mrs. Treadwell has a moment of illumination, the recognition of humanity's desperate need of understanding and the desolation of its absence, as she recalls the shamed and self-pitying manner of the Baumgartners and realizes that they have been silently, desperately pleading for love in spite of their fitness or unfitness, or even their ability, to give love in return.

This isolation of theme to a set of shipboard circumstances is a structural device admirably suited to Miss Porter's purpose. The *Vera* leaves Mexico, a land torn by class strife and violence. It enters history again when it puts in at Bremerhaven. But in the meantime the story of the voyage has been surrounded by the space of silence that a true work of art requires.

In a novel like *Ship of Fools* there can be no final resolution, with goodness rewarded and wrongdoing punished. The voyage ends and the passengers go about their business, indifferent to everything except their private concerns. If we remember the time of the story, we realize why the irresolution of the ending is necessary to Miss Porter's design. Germany is preparing for the whole terrifying and obscene Nazi regime, the world for the violence and death of another great war. Trapped in their present, these people have no thought of the future they are helping to shape.

Miss Porter says what she has to say with honesty and simplicity, with moral

subtlety and stylistic evocation. In this novel she shows that she is capable of keeping under control during the long flight the same qualities that we find in her shorter fiction—the power of picture and symbol to probe deeply into human nature, the power of dramatic scene to illuminate a lifetime or an entire society, the power of language to create a world of sense impressions. Somber as it is in its insights and resonance, few novels of recent years have faced up to the problem of man's need for moral definition with greater reality of the imagination or authority of fact. *Ship of Fools* is a notable novel, perhaps a great one.

THE SHORT STORIES OF A. E. COPPARD

Author: A. E. Coppard (1878-1957)

First published: *Adam and Eve* and *Pinch Me*, 1921; *Clorinda Walks in Heaven*, 1922; *The Black Dog*, 1923; *Fishmonger's Fiddle*, 1925; *The Field of Mustard*, 1926; *Count Stefan*, 1928; *Silver Circus*, 1928; *The Man From Kilsheelan*, 1930; *The Hundredth Story of A. E. Coppard*, 1931; *Nixey's Harlequin*, 1921; *Cheefoo*, 1932; *Crotty Shinkwin*, 1932; *Dunky Fitlow*, 1933; *Ring the Bells of Heaven*, 1933; *Emergency Exit*, 1934; *Ninepenny Flute*, 1937; *Tapster's Tapestry*, 1938; *You Never Know, Do You?*, 1939

"I am," said A. E. Coppard, "a writer about people who live, talk, do, without anything at the back of my mind than what I conceive to be fitting for their presentation as interesting human beings." This direct and modest statement was characteristic of the author, an expression of deceptive innocence, neither denying nor emphasizing his quality of art, which was strongly individual and notably self-contained. A master of the modern short story, his long career began in 1921 with his first publication, *Adam and Eve* and *Pinch Me*, and lasted until his death in 1957 with the printing the same year of an autobiography, *It's Me*. O Lord! Coppard was one of the few whose position can be described as maverick. The irony is that he always alluded to his work as part of the continuing English tradition, and declined in fact to call what he wrote "stories." They were more precisely, he said, "tales," offspring of an

ancient art, which was "a thing of joy even before writing, not to mention printing, was invented."

Considering his remarkable range, psychological subtlety, and penetration, it seems at first glance hard to understand why he did not promote himself more as modern. In an age of literary experimentation, of publicly devaluating values and making rampant symbolism, Coppard maintained that he was pursuing an ordinary course, telling stories merely because that was what he liked to do.

The key to this evasion, of not making a little more histrionic bid for fame, may have been suggested by Frank O'Connor, who notes in Coppard a deep concern for personal freedom. Also, it is pointed out that Coppard in his plots was fascinated by the "secretiveness" of women. We might carry this observation further and see that with many of Coppard's main characters, not only women but men and

children also, there is often some vital inner judgment concealed. The hero may never explain his actions to others. The revelations are left implicit. In the web of his own enigmas, the protagonist is either trapped (as in the powerful and nearly too frustrating love story "Judith") or triumphant; or more usually, as in the mysterious and sensual "Dusky Ruth" and the circumspect "Black Dog," he falls into a silence which is both comprehension and wonder, before the rich, incommunicable sense of the world. In "Black Dog," the hero is laconic because he believes it useless to try to analyze a person's deficiencies or failings. Others see people in different angles, in different ways and one is both lucky and wise if he can maintain the particular angle of vision from which he views himself.

Such a vision is, by its nature, solitary. About Coppard's people, there is an odd restiveness. They exist, however, not in preachments of shared rebellion. Each is fighting convention in his own way. Sometimes he goes by ridiculous or tragic routes, as in "Ring the Bells of Heaven," the saga of a man who wants to be an actor but turns out to be a tramp evangelist. Yet all have a unique flavor; the realism is uncompromising. Against the mores of poverty, sentimental sex, tyrannies of religious belief, domestic moralities, Coppard's characters all search for the individual way. If, then, this tendency toward the individualistic was also carried, as it is, to the kinds of characters he selected, and of necessity as a writer he was seeking his own stride, in keeping with this need he must avoid the pace of other writers—even though foregoing the eminence of the contemporary.

Coppard's output included several volumes of poems, a collection of stories concerning the supernatural, some tales of allegorical fantasy (among these are "The Green Drake," "Father Raven," and "The Fair Young Willow Tree," of an ascorbic wit and lightness akin to Hans Christian Andersen) the latter interspersed with his own stream which

was regional and naturalistic. He wrote about laborers, publicans, farming people, village craftsmen, poachers, country folk; the dialogue is colloquial, a just rendering and precise. His reputation is based on the rural. Yet, in the language style, having to do with narrative sequence, background descriptions, there is an impressive music, philosophic scope, and sensitivity to variation that can only be likened in English letters to Shakespeare and Dickens. In the use of rough syllabics, robust metaphors, apt or humorous plays on words, he may have his equal in the twentieth century, but no one is better. "The Higgler," "Fishmonger's Fiddle," "Arabesque—the Mouse," "The Cherry Tree" have been regarded by critics and writers, who still apologize for, or boast of, being among Coppard's few but faithful readers, as masterpieces. "The Field of Mustard" is a special example of Coppard's double-barrelled gift for the poetic and naturalistic. The subject is the meeting of three women, in a mustard field, who are all past their prime and broken by life. In conversation they reveal the truth of love, physical experience, and mortal loss. Their speech has the elegiac authority of the poor: it is at once expansive and withdrawn. Meanwhile, in the descriptions of nature, there is communicated an atmosphere that combines the kind of weather it is and the profundity of life. Telling is Coppard's description of their silence as they went to their homes, in the light of fading day, while the earth itself seemed to sigh in the deep knowledge of some sadness or calamity beyond the knowledge of man.

In theme, Coppard is neither overly pessimistic nor hopeful. From the reality of each story, he extracts a natural essence. Ford Madox Ford called him as a prose writer a lyricist, and likened him to Herrick and Donne. The comparison is appropriate, though at times the opposite could be said. There is a farcical element and recklessness to his talent. A perfectly straightforward sentence may suddenly vault into Joyce-like elabora-

tions—as in the reminiscence (from Coppard's autobiography) of how he bought at a library sale Henry James's *The Lesson of the Master* for fourpence three farthing. Also, in language, the verbal exuberance reaches such high points that sometimes it turns into a verbal mockery. Those who have criticized Coppard have been offended by the saturnine. His conceits, jocosity, flamboyance, "prankiness" are the other, if not the reasonably balanced, side of his passions.

But what Coppard had to say is a can-

vas for all this. Whether he felt his craft to be so total that he did not want to explain, or that he was merely a workman given to his trade, he was determined not to play a part in the pattern of his age. Coppard did not say he was experimenting, in order to be original. Such an attitude is unstated science, not to mention unadvertised art. This is something which the world at large may not yet have learned sufficiently, which needs going back to the what, not the why, it is in A. E. Coppard's fiction.

THE SHORT STORIES OF D. H. LAWRENCE

Author: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

First published: *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, 1914; *England, My England*, 1922; *The Ladybird*, 1923; *St. Mawr*, together with *The Princess*, 1925; *The Woman Who Rode Away*, 1928; *Love Among the Haystacks*, 1930; *The Lovely Lady and Other Stories*, 1933; *A Modern Lover*, 1934

The short stories of D. H. Lawrence are many and varied; in the complete edition they fill three volumes. If any one of these stories can be singled out as central to the art of Lawrence, however, one must invariably choose "The Prussian Officer." It begins under the aspect of nature; its protagonists are soldiers moving down a German country road surrounded by thickets of trees, ripe and heavy crops, green meadows, and tall black pine woods. Everywhere there is a sense of ripening, and the men are at the mercy of a harsh and brilliant sunlight. The orderly and the Captain are the principals of this story: the former moves slowly and painfully across our field of vision on foot, the latter moves quickly and savagely on horseback. The Captain has the look of a man at odds with life. He is solitary, bitter, a figure of the soldier for whom there is no reality but war. Significantly, he is unmarried. Although now and then he finds a mistress, he is sexually isolated: after the event he goes back to duty tense, hostile, and aggressive. However latent at this point, the Captain is a sexual deviate. As the story unfolds we see that he is in fact a sadist.

In decided contrast, the orderly is one of Lawrence's perfectly heterosexual heroes. He is in a sense the male counterpart of Lady Chatterley: strong, heavy, swarthy, full of animal vitality. The orderly appears to be a figure of an ideal kind, perhaps of Laurentian nature. What evidently matters about him is that he is capable of giving and sustaining love. The great difference between him and his isolated superior is that he is in love, or perhaps the difference may be the fact that he is capable of experiencing and inspiring love.

It is this quality which motivates the hatred of his superior. With increasing fury the Captain senses the difference between the full humanity of his orderly and his own desiccated and withdrawn being. This realization drives him to a passion of hatred, and to the action which is central to the narrative. In a passion of hatred both for the orderly and for himself, he beats the orderly furiously, kicking him until he collapses. The orderly is covered with enormous bruises but, even more pointedly, he himself experiences a kind of hatred foreign to him before that moment. From this

point the action of the story really begins. In a semi-delirium of outrage and pain, under the terrific pressure of the heat of the march and his awakened hatred, the orderly attacks his superior and strangles him. The story is simply told: a principle of evil has attacked a work of nature; in turn it is destroyed. The orderly himself dies after he has proved this point.

In many of the short stories there runs this theme of the confrontation of primitive nature with civilized corruption. In these stories character serves a double function, that of realism and that of symbolism. One story that serves to indicate this fact is "Daughters of the Vicar." Here there is no elemental confrontation of force against force, yet the opposing principles are the same. Love opposes hatred, fertility revolts against frigidity. The Reverend Mr. Lindley is the vicar of the story; he harms no one directly, but the terms of his life prove to be damaging in the extreme to those with whom he lives. He is what may be called a mechanical Christian; he tends his parish with care, respect, and objectivity. Yet he is careful at all times to maintain a distance not only between his social class and that of his coal-mining parishioners, but between his sense of self and their very identities.

The Reverend Mr. Lindley is not only a fierce snob but also a person devoted to extinguishing the unconscious needs and passions of all life. In this he may be compared to another moral invalid, Sir Clifford Chatterley. His household is a monstrosity: his wife becomes a neurotic invalid, he himself is a kind of machine, and his daughters are slowly squeezed into the inhuman mold of his design. They enter, unwillingly to be sure, the same life of obedience to all the codes, rules, customs, and negations he imposes. Yet one daughter, like the orderly of "The Prussian Officer," breaks through to reality. In this story too the effort is not without its cost. She falls in love with a collier and, in a scene that is a triumph of domestic hatred, she is ex-

iled from her family and her class to live with him. But the severance is a kind of liberation. Her mother cries out that the daughter thinks only of herself, while the daughter thinks at this moment of the love that has enabled her to do just that. It is love in action, she realizes, that has made her awaken. In this case, as in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the protagonists are forced to live for a time under the normal conditions of society, circumstances which, conceived in terms of rules and regulations, carried out under the sanctions of family, caste, and class, reduce individuals to extensions of withered ideals. It is love that brings them back to individual life—not the traditional love of things spiritual, but, in Lawrence's cosmology, the love that is primitive, dark, and bodily. They awaken to life after they awaken to their bodies.

The short stories of Lawrence, like many of his novels, serve the overriding purpose of demonstrating certain of his convictions. They may be narratives, and they may have strong elements both of realism and romanticism, but they center on the predicament of those who are in a sense prisoners of the outside world. Like the heroine of "Daughters of the Vicar" the woman Katherine of "The Border Line" lives in a state of suspended animation. Although she is the picture of the sensual, feminine type, she is tied to a husband who is thin, ill, and feeble of constitution. She is described as soft-fleshed and voluptuous, while he, in a kind of aesthetic and ultimately existential opposition, is physically inconsequential. This opposition is in actuality one of Lawrence's moral categories. His protagonists are another version of the Sir Clifford-Lady Chatterley opposition, and what represents good in the mind of the novelist is the act that separates them rather than the sanctions which bind them together. Katherine begins to live only after her husband dies, and with a logic and boldness peculiarly his own Lawrence writes of the death scene that the departure of the husband is the re-

lease of the wife. The sick man does not awaken pity, but only contempt for not being strong and sexually potent. As he dies, the woman is drawn to another bed by her lover. It is an immoral act, but one symbolic of Lawrence's conception of re-living life.

What is important to Lawrence is not the morality-immorality contrast, or the indecency displayed: he thinks only of the symbolic oppositions. The husband is for him simply useless, while the lover is a carrier of the life force. What matters ultimately is that one man stands for the force of death, and the other for that of life. Lawrence's male characters stand or fall insofar as they are committed to his own gauge of moral action.

The Reverend Mr. Lindley, the Prussian officer, Sir Clifford Chatterley, the dying husband of "The Border Line," are all the creatures of life as we know it. Their contrasts and enemies—the gamekeeper in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the coal miner in "Daughters of the Vicar," the orderly of "The Prussian Officer," the lover in "The Border Line"—are crea-

tures of another kind of life. Their virtues are not moral but simply existential. It is intentional that the lover in "The Border Line" comes from out of the rocks and the forest. The first adulterous love takes place among the rocks, and the woman finds there an experience she had never known before. What unites these existential heroes is the fact that they do come from out of the "real" world of nature. They have, so to speak, absolutely no intellectual dimensions. Like the woodcutter hero of *The Fox*, they are signaled by a stubborn refusal to abide by rules and a terrible cleaving to the flesh. The heroines of these stories are inevitably attracted, repelled, and eventually transformed by these men. A good deal of implicit social commentary is involved because the men are invariably from a class below that of their women. The union is symbolic, perhaps too evidently so. A Freudian might put it this way: the Ego becomes fully constituted only by accepting the burden of the Unconscious. In order to do so, it must first reject the artifices of the Super-Ego.

THE SHORT STORIES OF E. M. FORSTER

Author: E. M. Forster (1879-)

First published: *The Celestial Omnibus*, 1911; *The Eternal Moment*, 1928

Whether on business or vacation, a man—say he is middle-aged—leaves an England which is debased, industrial, and unpoetic for a Mediterranean country such as Italy or Greece. What he finds as if by accident in this more primitive, pre-industrial country, in a momentary event which is both in and out of time, a surprising perception wherein he discovers his genuine identity, obliges him quite literally to change his living in accord with the new knowledge of self, or die. Such is the archetypal if not practical situation which lies at the base of the short stories of E. M. Forster. While few of the stories fully correspond to this pattern, it nevertheless furnishes a useful means for perceiving their basic unity.

Forster's short stories, written in general immediately before and immediately after his major novels, *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, do not make claims as imposing as his major fiction and tend in fact to have a stylized period quality which in some cases does not wear well. The stylization may take the form of a brief allegory ("The Other Side of the Hedge"), pre-Orwell doom-predicting science-fiction ("The Machine Stops"), the picaresque tale ("The Road from Colonus"). But certain themes are persistent throughout all the stories, notably the theme of imprisonment ("chains" as a continuing metaphor) and escape, and often the escape is at once mental and geographical. The motif of travel as es-

cape and discovery accords both with Forster's own period of personal travel in these decades, and with the general international quality of pre-World War I Europe.

The tone of the earlier collection of stories, *The Celestial Omnibus*, is at once established, and predicted, by the first of these, "The Story of a Panic"—with the exception of the uncollected "Albergo Empedocle," also chronologically the first. In an ironic manner which is not typical of the majority of his stories, Forster recounts through the eyes of a sensitive, intelligent English traveler in Italy the dionysiac epiphany of a boy named Eustace. During a rural outing attended by a representative group of English tourists—a middle-aged female dilettante, a carping aesthete—there suddenly occurs a moment of inexplicable fear; the cause of the fright is unapparent, but its effect is felt as tangibly as if some prehistoric monster had reared its head in a scene of pastoral loveliness. This simile is hardly casual; what has taken place is a resurgence of the primordial power of nature, not that of natural charm so admired by the onlookers, but that of the direct, sensual potency inherent in the countryside. This sudden, unforeseen revelation sets these cultivated and timid souls in a frenzy, except for the boy Eustace, previously scorned by the narrator for his unathletic and brattish nature. One finds here one of the recurrent motifs of the stories: the need to "set one's self right" in youth. As a later story, "The Point of It," remarks at greater length, only through establishing this kind of communion with things as they are, not through the veils men hang about them, in youth, before one can be easily lulled into self-deception, can a fundamentally fertile rapport with life be achieved. Forster points out this fact even more clearly through the story's uncommon irony: the narrator, previously unable to see the source of Eustace's corruption within the virtues of his own society, is equally incapable of understanding the boy's exal-

tation after his conversation. To a "civilized" mind Eustace's wild actions can only be the result of some kind of mental disturbance not the manifestation of the reclamation of man's primitive, direct connection with his world. The incomprehension is reinforced by the secondary action of Eustace's betrayal by his one confrere at the resort, the Italian youth Gennaro; the narrator, in a moment of strategic inspiration appropriate to civilized man, bribes him to return the boy. The scheme backfires, to cause Eustace's liberation and Gennaro's death.

The experience of the world in its direct reality must be, Forster insists, panic; and its peculiar mood can best be described in a work whose situation is deliberately, initially, supernatural, and thus makes the reader aware of the tensions so directly germane to Forster's thesis. In the earlier stories the prototypic example of this effect is "The Celestial Omnibus," which deals, once again, with a boy, but one who, unlike Eustace, already dwells in a state of literature. Significantly, the story is in the third person, and the well-meaning narrator has become now the boy's interlocutor and opposite, the pillar of the community, Mr. Septimus Bons. The boy has discovered, near his home, the *Celestial Omnibus*, the eternally vital vehicle through time and space which great literature is; his discovery, however, is mocked by his culturally slavish bourgeois parents who hold out his reputed expedition to heaven to Mr. Bons as an example of childish perversity and deceit. When Mr. Bons accepts the boy's challenge and accompanies him on the *Celestial Omnibus*, the result is predictable: when faced with the creators who should be dead, whose workers are symbolically entombed by him in vellum, he falls to his death from the heights while his uncorrupted companion is elevated on the shield of Achilles.

The directly classical allusions aroused by "The Story of a Panic" are continued elsewhere, notably in "Other Kingdom" and "The Curate's Friend." The stories,

which complement each other, are located in an English rural milieu, and they involve that settled and clerically infiltrated domain in collision with the antique immersion in a sensuous and vitally transcendent nature. In the first of these, the theme is enunciated by the translated sentence from the *Eclogues*, "Mortal fools, there be gods in these woods." The classical instruction, conducted by the rather fussy narrator of the story, is soon broken into by the property-owner fiancé of one of the pupils, Mr. Harcourt Worters, elated at having added a new meadow to his land. Upon their visiting this place, the Forsterian antithesis is posed: Mr. Worters is anxious to fence in the property, to place his mark upon it, while his betrothed, a rude girl from Ireland whom he is educating, wants to leave the meadow as it is, unbounded. Her spiritual divorce from Worters is physically confirmed when, during a true ecstasy which happens at a picnic in the woods, she forever departs and really makes asses out of the mortals in the woods. The same humorous perversity also appears in "The Curate's Friend," in which a clergyman meets a faun, a reminder of Britain's Roman past, who by casting his clerical acquaintance into a fit of despair causes him for the first time to react in an emotionally honest fashion to his experiences.

If one can speak of a movement from the earlier to the later stories, it is not characterized by an increased complexity but by a greater diversification; the later stories are essentially their predecessors given the flesh and blood of the social environment in which they occur. "The Machine Stops," the first of the tales in *The Eternal Moment*, demonstrates this transition quite well: despite the fantastic setting of the story, in some nameless futurity, its tone, unlike that of "The Celestial Omnibus," is highly practical. We are cast into an England of the future in which the most specifically "realistic" elements of the earlier stories—the human corruption of the natural environment, the elimination of sensual response and

individuality—have reached their most extreme expression. The terrible responsibility of intelligence, which cannot escape a confrontation of the tangible facts of existence, has been given up to the machine, which soon becomes the object of a new religious devotion more potent than the well-intentioned Christianity of the curate. Forster affirms what Alexis de Tocqueville had foreseen in 1848: that the tyranny of a modern state, representing the will of the masses and with advanced means at its disposal, would be more terrible and far-reaching than any hitherto seen. The unity Kuno feels with those who have gone before, and will come after him, on freeing himself from the deranged subterranean labyrinth, is that of man rediscovering his humanity.

Forster's thesis is more substantially, if not more spectacularly, presented in "The Point of It," which picks up a theme already stated in "The Road From Colonus": the impossibility of grasping the source of truth when one has accepted a conventional set of values. In the earlier story, the old man, unlike Oedipus who led his daughter to the place of his disappearance from earth, is prevented by his daughter from accepting the gift of death at the place where he finally experiences a revelation of the real value of classical civilization, a value not to be found in the ruins of Thermopylae or the Parthenon. Forster's picture of Mickey, the hero of "The Point of It," furnishes us with the genesis of such a man, who, by doing good is rewarded by his society and rises in it, though with no benefit to those closest to him. The story begins with an incident which points to a possible source of salvation for Mickey: he permits an invalid acquaintance to overexert himself while rowing against the tide in an estuary. His immediate guilt as soon as the acquaintance dies is still another of Forster's eternal moments, returning to Mickey at intervals through a life of humanitarian actions by which he attempts to atone. Only after his death

—by a *tour de force* Forster follows his character's moral progress even after death—does he realize that the conventional guilt was wrong, that his encouragement to his friend to respond to the situation as such was the only genuine human action in his life. The recognition itself makes for his eternal salvation.

Forster offers an even more enlarged and socially realized description of the same belief in his two final stories, "The Story of the Siren" and "The Eternal Moment." In the first of these the comprehension of a possible source of human revitalization, in a world where Christianity is a mere gesture, comes by means of the siren rising from the eternal sea. The life of the poor fisherman Giuseppe is totally disrupted by his encounter with her, and when he seeks out and marries a woman who has similarly experienced such a vision, he then disrupts the entire life of the village in which he lives, particularly the priest who causes the wife's destruction and the death as well of their unborn child. Nevertheless, like the sea siren whose perpetuation is identifiable with the sea itself whose power can never be encroached upon by man, the promise of their child remains forever to be born. This inescapable possibility of reconciliation comes even more poignantly to life in the case of Miss Raby, the spinster novelist in "The Eternal Moment." She returns to the village of Vorta hoping to undo the damage she had done in popularizing the village in her novel, *The Eternal Moment*. Ironically, even though

she discovers the worst effects of civilization to have come to pass in the town, there is a redeeming feature: her rediscovery of the amorous encounter which, she finds, had been the true germ of her novel. Once again Forster has shown how a whole life can be justified by the detailed, if adventitious and unexpected, understanding of a significant moment in the past.

There is a distinctly Dionysian quality of emphasis in these stories of Forster's young manhood, a Nietzschean emphasis, complicated by a characteristic English reticence. As in the major novels, the mystic revelation of culture-bound adults, or the rescue of an intuitive child from uncomprehending elders, is Forster's overwhelming interest. Yet the characters in the short stories are noticeably more maneuverable, flatter and less rounded (to use Forster's terms from his *Aspects of the Novel*) than the people in his longer fictions: they move more in the world of fantasy and allegory where moral values are clear cut and the civilization of the British Empire, the Industrial Revolution, the increase of knowledge, the defacement of the countryside are unambiguously to be condemned. The stories put starkly the alternatives of sickness and health, both for individuals and their communities. Forster is at one with his novelistic contemporaries Lawrence, Mann, and Proust in repeating again and again in fictional situations the agonized warning that we must "Only Connect."

THE SHORT STORIES OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Author: Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

first published: *Three Stories and Ten Poems*, 1923; *In Our Time*, 1924; *Men Without Women*, 1927; *Winner Take Nothing*, 1933; *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-nine Stories*, 1938

Ernest Hemingway, who ranks with William Faulkner as an indisputable giant of twentieth century American fiction, wrote more than fifty short stories. Together they constitute probably the

greatest, certainly the most widely known and influential, work in this genre during this period, and a dozen or so, including "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "In

Another Country," "A Way You'll Never Be," "The Killers," "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and "Big Two-Hearted River," are unsurpassed and unsurpassable today or at any time. Perhaps most at home in this form, which in his case constitutes an unusually large portion of a major writer's work, Hemingway used it for artistic purposes and achievements of the highest order.

Hemingway's first short-story publication of note was *In Our Time*, a collection containing fourteen stories bounded and interspersed by brief interchapters on violence coldly observed at bull fights, in World War I, and especially in the Graeco-Turkish War, which Hemingway had recently viewed as a war correspondent. Eight of the stories have for their protagonist Nick Adams—a character Hemingway employed frequently, not only here but also in numerous later stories—and are arranged chronologically, tracing Nick's development from childhood to maturity. Because stories about Nick begin and end the collection, and since the other six stories are placed so that the events in them correspond temporally to stages in Nick's growth, *In Our Time* has a narrative unity similar to that of an episodic novel. As a quasi-novel the book belongs in a category with James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. It belongs there not merely because of its narrative organization but also because, like them, it is thematically unified around a concern with what Joyce called paralysis, the spiritual plight of modern man; only where Joyce and Anderson chose a specific geographical place, Hemingway, more ambitiously, chose "our time," a vague but readily available temporal location, as the setting for that theme.

Though collected again in multiples of fourteen in *Men Without Women* (1927) and *Winner Take Nothing* (1933), and then finally gathered in a largely complete edition in *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938), a collection containing the

first three collections plus seven other stories, Hemingway's stories after *In Our Time* are not bound together chronologically and narratively. Thematically and stylistically, they are, however, as collections or separate stories, continuations of *In Our Time*; all his stories, indeed his entire work, nonfiction as well as long and short fiction, are confined to a narrow range which is surveyed repeatedly and thoroughly. That narrowness is evident everywhere in his work, and so in his subject, which Hemingway defined in the introduction to *Men at War* (1942), a collection of war stories and accounts he edited, where he wrote: "When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. It can happen to other people; but not to you. Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you. After being severely wounded two weeks before my nineteenth birthday I had a bad time until I figured it out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me. Whatever I had to do men had always done. If they had done it then I could do it too and the best thing was not to worry about it." The wound, that affliction through which man becomes aware of his mortality, of his finite limitations, or, in traditional Christian parlance, of his fallen state and spiritual futility, is the definitive encounter with reality upon which all Hemingway's short stories, and other fiction as well, are closely focused.

In Our Time initiates Hemingway's inquiry into this authentic and authenticating moment. In the first story, "Indian Camp," Nick is present when his father, a doctor, performs a Caesarian operation on an Indian woman who has suffered long, agonizing labor pains. Nick, unable to watch the operation after his first curiosity passed, rejects its relevance for himself, and instead, after the delivery, while crossing a lake in which he trails his hand, feels sure that he himself will never die. Since *In Our Time* is about

love, not war, Nick's war wound is briefly and dryly treated in an interchapter. The more important wounds for him and in the book as a whole are the wounds of love, the pain of its effects and loss. Yet despite his being subjected to the consequences it leads to for the Indian husband, who, finding his wife's suffering intolerable, cuts his own throat, and Ad Francis, who goes insane when public pressure forces his wife to leave him, and his own disillusioning affairs with Marge in "An End of Something" and Luz in "A Very Short Story," Nick marries and gets his wife pregnant. When George, a friend with whom he is skiing in "Cross Country Snow," remarks on the hardship of life in general, Nick says it is not exactly that, though he cannot explain why. He only confesses that that's the way it is. And in the last story of the collection, "Big Two-Hearted River," Nick moves through and beyond the burnt-out land to the river, completing a cycle wherein he progresses from innocence through experience via his wounds to self-renewal, from timelessness into time and mortality and back to timelessness again. Somewhat paradoxically, in the end he chooses the high ground over the deep, dark, tragic water of the swamp, but in doing so he rejects death, the impersonal, self-obliterating power in the universe. His war and love wounds have thrown him radically back upon himself, have defined his conditions as an individual human being, and he accepts those as necessary and even good. His bad times over, he has chosen to live within his human limitations and so has stopped worrying. Like a good soldier, he has learned to hold his imagination at bay and live completely in the present as the meaningful all of experience.

In later stories Hemingway expands upon and clarifies phases in this cycle centering around the wound, with death moving into the foreground, love, when present, into the background. Though innocence occurs in its purest form on one later occasion in "The Snows of Kili-

manjaro," where the protagonist's wife, sentimental and preferring illusion to reality like so many women in Hemingway's fiction, fails to recognize the reality of death when her husband dies, and in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" the hero learns not to worry when he assumes his manhood by a sudden act which liberates him from the fear of death, Hemingway's imagination after *In Our Time* is absorbed with the effects resulting from a poignant consciousness of death or a wound received in war. Examples of the former are "A Day's Wait," in which a nine-year-old boy mistakenly waits all day to die, then has a rough time when he realizes that he will live; or "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," in which an old man and a lonely waiter experience nothingness, the ultimate truth revealed by the wound about a world of death. "A Way You'll Never Be," which elaborates upon Nick's wounding related in an interchapter of *In Our Time*, and in *In Another Country*, are Hemingway's subtlest accounts of Nick's bad time resulting from his wound, which spreads its poison throughout his consciousness and destroys all his illusions—not only those of love and immortality but those of invulnerability, heroism, patriotism, comradeship, security, technology, and rehabilitation as well. The wound eventually strips away all grounds for certainty or hope and bares the reality of inexorable time and change.

"A writer's job," Hemingway repeatedly insisted, "is to write simple true sentences, to tell the truth so purely that it would be truer than anything factual, an absolute truth." This aspiration, inherited from realism and disciplined by his training as a journalist, impelled him to report on the sorrowful loss which lies at the heart of love and death, with precision, economy, and clarity. He sought, above all, like Harold Krebs in "Soldier's Home" of *In Our Time*, to avoid the "nausea" which comes from untruth or exaggeration. He realized that that feeling depended upon his never lying, to

others but most importantly to himself, about his own inner fears. The complete truth about himself, about his predicament as a man, must be faced honestly and without cowardice. His aesthetic aim, the moral and literary values to which he severely committed himself, his tough, realistic acknowledgment of man's deficiencies, coupled with a sane skepticism recognizing both the powers and limits of human intelligence and a sense that the highest, distinctive human enjoyment comes from understanding—simply knowing or being conscious—makes Hemingway the twentieth century's greatest scientific writer. Since we live in a scientific era, that fact makes his short stories, along with the rest of his work, the most accurate and profound statement of the way things are for scientific man.

Writing from the heart of his being, which throbbed in unison with the vital currents of Western culture, Hemingway founded his art upon a thoroughly integrated sense of life, so that despite his apparent mannerisms he has been and remains inimitable. At a time when realism, committed to the dominion of the senses, matter, and environment, held the literary throne, and romanticism, ex-royalty, was challenging realism for the renewed supremacy of a passionate consummation with a self-transcendent ideal, Hemingway created the classical short

story. A younger contemporary and friend of such foremost modernists as Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Pablo Picasso, Hemingway learned his intellectualism and classicism from them but then went even further than they toward realizing them. Where their intellectualism and classicism tended to show itself somewhat gaudily in book learning, his was marked by an association of sensibility so subtle as to be seamless. His apparent anti-intellectualism actually signifies a completely successful pragmatic interfusion of thought into experience or consciousness. His short stories, unlike realistic ones, which are oppressive with their emphasis on the overwhelming details of the sensory world, and romantic ones, which sob their cries of bitter, futile melancholy born of frustration, exemplify the active mind in quest of essences being nourished by its power to know and abide by the truth. Avoiding the tragic and extremes, deep, dark waters and the night, the unconscious and romantically ideal, Hemingway wrote stories by and for rational creatures who care about feeling cool and clear inside themselves, who care about a clean, well-lighted place for thought and action within the necessary human limitations. As long as anyone cares for these, the greatness and cogency of Hemingway's short stories will remain undiminished.

THE SHORT STORIES OF EUDORA WELTY

Author: Eudora Welty (1909-)

First published: *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories* (1941); *The Wide Net and Other Stories* (1943); *The Golden Apples* (1949); *The Bride of the Innisfallen* (1955)

Eudora Welty is one of the best contemporary writers of short stories. A writer of novels as well, her reputation has been built upon her short fiction, especially that of her early collections, *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*, and *The Wide Net and Other Stories*. Although somewhat restricted in setting, her short stories have demonstrated a wide variety in subject matter, ranging

from the treatment of sideshow freaks in "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" to that of the improvisations of a jazz musician in "Powerhouse." There is also a wide variety in moods, from the broad humor of "Why I Live at the P.O." and "Petrified Man" to the ironic and grim horror of "Flowers for Marjorie," from the fantasy of "Asphodel" to the devastatingly prosaic quality of "No Place for

You, My Love." There is also a wide variety in time, for although most of the stories are set in the present, some like "First Love," "A Still Moment," and "The Burning" go back to the times of Aaron Burr, Audubon, and the Civil War.

However wide the variety of theme, mood, and time, the first thing that strikes the reader is Miss Welty's absolute control over all her material. She is a master craftsman, and when her stories fail, as they sometimes do, it is often because her virtuosity as craftsman and experimenter overshadows the material on which she is operating. She has an uncanny ability to create a mood and setting for a story in a few sentences. "The Whistle" and "The Key" reveal in their opening paragraphs all there is to know about the story. Nothing is wasted and all is used to make clearer the inevitable epiphany that occurs in her stories. Perhaps it is her interest in photography and painting that has sharpened this gift of observation. And her ear seems as sharp as her eye; the beauty parlor gossip in "Petrified Man" echoes diction, cadence, and tone brilliantly. The story called "A Memory" is a good illustration of this control, as the girl on the beach seems to be enacting Miss Welty's own creative process. The girl makes frames out of her fingers and observes the world through them. Whereas the girl cannot include the disordered and grotesque in her framing vision, Miss Welty is able to confine and fix all of life in her frame. An order is given to every "still moment" that her artistry captures, and the purely formal delight the reader experiences is one of the great pleasures her short stories afford.

But there is more than a caught moment in her stories. What gives them their solidity is that there is a caught place as well. Although her stories are mostly set in the present, they can not really be called contemporary. For example, none of her stories in her first two collections has anything to do with World War II, although they were published at its

height. The only sense in which the present is contemporary is that she has chosen to write of the contemporary South, more specifically the region of Mississippi. Only in her recent work, *The Bride of the Innisfallen* in particular, has she moved outside the South for her settings, and this move has not produced better work. In this volume stories such as "Kin" and "No Place for You, My Love," which are set in the South, tend to be the best ones. This strong sense of place is closely tied to Miss Welty's artistic control. It is the concrete reality to which her lyrical flights and moves toward fantasy must always return. Miss Welty herself seems aware of the importance of place, and she has written an article called "Place in Fiction" that throws much light upon her own fictional achievements.

Moving inside this frame of artistic control and place, her short fiction reveals certain views and themes that seem to be characteristic of the stories as a whole. They are often an exploration of what it means to be isolated and set apart. In story after story the leading character seems set apart or cut off from his world. His isolation is often marked by a peculiar grotesque quality, as if the spiritual and emotional separateness were symbolized by physical abnormality. Her stories are thus peopled with deaf mutes, Ellie and Albert in "The Key" or Joel Mayes in "First Love"; by deformed Negroes, Keela in "Keela the Outcast Indian Maiden"; by the feeble-minded, Lily Daw in "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies"; by the very old and very small, Phoenix Jackson in "A Worn Path" or Solomon in "Livvie"; by the very young and very fat, Gabriella in "Going to Naples"; and by the frustrated and insane, Clytie in "Clytie" and Miss Theo in "The Burning."

Yet those who are isolated are most often people who seem more valuable than the world that isolates them. The reason is that Miss Welty treats their separateness with sympathy and even with

love. The isolation is what allows her to get inside her characters and, once inside, their shared isolation, with us and with the author, becomes a thing of beauty. Miss Welty is very close to Sherwood Anderson in this aspect of her fiction. The "truth" in the grotesque is the special theme of *Winesburg, Ohio*, and the beauty, if not the truth, is the very thing Miss Welty focuses upon. Because the abnormality is lovingly handled, the characters are invested with a certain beauty and mystery. Mr. Marblehall has a secret second life, with a second wife and child in another part of town. Ellie and Albert share a speechless communication that sets them apart from the others in the waiting room in "The Key," a communication that moves over into love as they discover the key on the floor. This mystery is often connected with a certain ritual, as it is in Phoenix Jackson's long trek along the "worn path" to get medicine for her grandson. Phoenix is as old as the land itself, yet the mysterious force that keeps her going, and over which she seems to have little control, gives her life a singular sort of beauty for those who see her life in its entirety and not in its isolation. Mystery is closely related to the lyrical quality as well as the ritualistic and almost mythical. As the couple in "The Whistle" silently burn all their furniture while the whistle blown when a freeze threatens is sounding outside, one senses the elegiac beauty created in their wordless act and the beauty revealed as this action enables them to speak with each other.

At times the beauty is revealed by the fact of isolation. At other times it comes as a result of the pathos created by the attempt to reach beyond the isolation. In other words, there are those cut off in place and those cut off from place. R. J. Bowman, in Miss Welty's first published story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman," is an example of the latter. By occupation as well as nature an outsider, Bowman is a rootless salesman who stumbles onto a family in the middle of nowhere, Sonny

and his pregnant wife, and in their prelapsarian, timeless familial bond of love he sees all that his life has not been. But because he sees, he achieves a certain human dignity even as he dies, somewhat ironically, of a heart attack. His heart fails, but also succeeds. The same pathos is achieved in the treatment of Harris, another traveling salesman who in "The Hitch-Hikers" wishes people would call him "you" rather than "he." Then there is the Eastern businessman in "No Place for You, My Love" who travels south out of New Orleans with another stranger to the place, an unnamed woman, but goes to the end of the road and returns without ever knowing why he went or where.

As opposed to these figures cut off from place, there are those cut off in place, and these are more tragically and also more comically treated. There is, on the comic side, the humorously paranoid narrator of "Why I Live at the P.O." who escapes the isolation of living with her family by going to live at the post office. The tragic statement of the familial sort of isolation is found in the person of Clytie, who is so hounded by her family and the demands they make on her that she is driven to suicide. There are all the characters living in Morgana in *The Golden Apples* who feel the need to escape but who also know that there is no escape.

Indeed, it can be said that most of these characters who are caught in their isolation are torn by two forces and move towards a tenuous sort of resolution. Most often it is a movement from innocence to experience, the kind symbolized in "Livvie," in which the young Negro wife whose old husband, Solomon, is on his deathbed, moves from her sheltered existence to the flashy world of Cash McCord, the field hand who offers her all the pleasures of the world. The same conflict and process is present in Jennie in "At the Landing," when her quest for Floyd leads her from her sheltered home to the shack along the river where she is raped by Floyd's fellow fishermen. And yet her in-

nocence seems to prevail, even as she is raped. The innocents are the blessed in Miss Welty's fiction, and if to the world their innocence takes on a grotesque quality, they appear to be normal in the loving world of the inner heart that Miss Welty explores so well.

Closely related to this theme of innocence and experience is the theme and structural device of the dream versus the reality, and the fusion that sometimes remains at the heart of life in general and life in Miss Welty's fiction in particular. Although this is a theme and structural device employed more fully in Miss Welty's later work, especially in "Music from Spain" in *The Golden Apples*, it can be seen in such early stories as "The Purple Hat," "Flowers for Marjorie," "Powerhouse," and "Old Mr. Marblehall." At times when the dream is submitted to the reality there is a shock, as in "Flowers for Marjorie" or "At the Landing"; but at other times the dream and the reality seem inseparable, as in "The Purple Hat" and "Powerhouse," whose improvisations on the theme of his wife's

death seem both real and unreal to the reader. What remains true is that most often it is the dream, the lyrical quality in which it is expressed, and the innocence that gives it birth that is beautiful. "Reality" is never beautiful in itself, but is made so by its contact with the dream and the characters who reveal or embody it.

With such emphasis given to man in his particular environment, there is not much attention given to his place in the universe. But although there is little metaphysical speculation in Miss Welty's stories, the presence of the universe and its reality is sometimes disturbingly felt. When perceived, the universe is at best indifferent and more often than not seemingly malevolent. Man is sometimes measured by his reaction to it, as in "The Whistle," where the warmth generated by the couple and their fire is equal to the chilling force of the unseasonal weather, but when special attention is drawn from man to the universe, man stands in a somewhat defeated posture.

THE SHORT STORIES OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Author: Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

First published: *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1955; *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1965

Criticism has only begun to come to grips with Flannery O'Connor's two novels and two collections of short stories. We recognize the dramatic power of the nineteen stories in her two collections but are repelled by their shocking conclusions. If we could narrow their application to the South from whence they come, as we can with *Tobacco Road*, for example, we would be much happier; but since they deal wholly with universals and are pervaded by an irony that seems both to involve and to mock us, we are forced to recognize that her vision encompasses the human condition, the naked spectacle of mortal man. Flannery

O'Connor is not telling us so much as she is reminding us that our "condition" is fourfold: we are sinners; we shall die; we are equal in the sight of God; and we cannot expect to understand God's mercy but must recognize it in whatever outrageous form it appears, which is the beginning of salvation. Her term for that recognition is the "revelation" of sin, or death, or equality, and the beginning of "redemption." She does not follow the process of redemption, only its initiation through whatever unlikely instrument God chooses. Both Flannery O'Connor and her God are ironists, and we and all her heroes are willful characters who

must be humbled in learning that the will of God must prevail. This is the guiding vision in all her work.

Most of the titles in *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* are ironically intended and provide a key to the author's meaning. Three of the shortest stories show her intention most clearly: "A Stroke of Good Fortune," "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," and "A Temple of the Holy Ghost." The first describes the progress up four flights of stairs of Ruby Hill, who is terrified of having a baby and gradually realizes as she climbs that she is four months pregnant. This is the "stroke of good fortune" her palmist foretold; from the most unlikely sources comes the truth about Ruby's "condition." The second story shows how death and truth come to "General" Sash of the Confederacy at the late age of one hundred and four; he is no general but he is surrounded by false memories of the Confederacy, especially at the Atlanta premiere of *Gone with the Wind*, and he joins in the pretense. Death, the enemy, did not get him during the Civil War, but eventually he catches up, even with a Confederate general. In the last of the three stories both a hermaphrodite and a platitudinous nun are shown to be "a temple of the Holy Ghost"; the outrageous and the comic are also clear signs of the truth for those who can both appreciate the ridiculous and get its message.

The other stories in the first collection fall into two groups: four independent stories which are related by theme; and three stories which use the same setting and similar cast. The latter group contains "A Circle in the Fire," "Good Country People," and the longest story Flannery O'Connor wrote, "The Displaced Person," which is the culmination of the volume. The common situation is an independent widow running a farm with the help of a succession of tenant farmers and some Negroes. In the first two stories the tenant farmer's wife acts as cool observer, like the Negro in *The Violent Bear It Away*, who offers a prac-

tical but unacceptable solution to the awkward situation which arises when an intruder arrives at the farm; in the last story the tenant farmer's wife dies and becomes the motive for the "accidental" death of the "Displaced Person." The meaning of the stories seems to be that if one embarks on an act of charity one must be very sure of one's motives. Mrs. Hopewell, in "Good Country People," may be mistaken in her notions of country folk; certainly her ideas led her educated daughter astray and thus to a realization of the truth about herself, that she is in no way superior to what her mother calls "good country people." The play of ambiguity in these two stories is resolved in the last by identifying Christ as a person displaced from Mrs. McIntyre's heart; when He comes to her in the guise of a Displaced Person she allows Him to be crucified again. It is not sufficient to be "nice"—a theme that recurs whenever this farm setting is used—one must be saved even at the cost of one's life. Mrs. McIntyre, like many of Flannery O'Connor's characters is dying as the result of her revelation, the late reconciliation of word and deed.

The other group of four stories may be distinguished by the death or salvation of the protagonists. The stories are remarkable for the creation of a totally independent universe for each; "The River" and "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," contain the contrast between the well-to-do and the poor, and end in death. The gentle death in the former of the four-year-old child seeking some meaning to his empty life is violently contrasted with the deaths of father, mother, baby, two children, and grandmother in the latter. Flannery O'Connor liked to read this story to her audiences, almost as if she were daring her hearers to face the truth in its most hideous manifestation. Solicitude for the family and the niceness of the grandmother notwithstanding, they will all perish at the hands of "The Misfit." The nickname is highly ironic: he is a "misfit" because he cannot find salva-

tion or meaning to life and he knows his fallen condition. But he is not a "misfit" in society of misfits who do not know their fallen condition and in turn call him a "misfit." A "good man" is not merely "hard to find"; without God he does not exist, and with God he knows he is a sinner.

The other two stories in this last group from *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* are "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" and "The Artificial Nigger." In the former the revelation is accomplished by a road sign Mr. Shiftlet sees when he abandons his idiot bride; both the sign and the idiot are common devices in Flannery O'Connor's work to represent a truth beneath the surface. The latter story became the title of the English edition of this collection; Flannery O'Connor was displeased at the choice because of the inevitable and slipshod references to the South in her work and because, as in all her writing, the ironic meaning of the title belongs in the context of the story. In "The Artificial Nigger" the remark to that effect prompts the reconciliation between old Mr. Head and his estranged grandson, Nelson, whom he has denied. This is probably the happiest story Flannery O'Connor wrote and it is important to her work in two ways; Nelson is the forerunner of the heroes of her two novels and her guiding vision is most succinctly and clearly stated in the next to last paragraph where Mr. Head sees that God's mercy is not a soothing balm but a burning flame that purifies the sinner.

The stories in the second collection, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, also fall into three groups. The first group comes early in the collection and in its material, corresponding roughly to the widow-farmer group in the first volume, seems to have come more directly from Flannery O'Connor's own experience. This first group includes the title story, "Greenleaf," "The Enduring Chill," and "The Comforts of Home." Each contains a spinsterish youngish bachelor and his

mother; the Angel of the Lord appears as a bull, a Negro mother, a delinquent girl, and blasts the complacency of the young man or the mother.

The second group of stories—"A View of the Woods," "Parker's Back," and "Judgment Day"—corresponds roughly to the last group in the first volume. Each story has a world of its own which is vividly created, though all part of the same countryside, and the characters would seem remote from the writer's experience if we did not know that, like John Millington Synge, she liked to stand behind the kitchen door and listen to "good country people" yarn with her mother. In two stories the meaning is clear: the saved and fearless soul so profoundly affects the hero's complacency in his way of life that, shaken, he tries to imitate the saved; his revelation is that he must seek his own way to God. In the last story in this group, "Judgment Day," the meaning is less clear; ambiguity plays around the central character and leaves us uncertain whether his way of life is that of salvation or not. One suspects the former because his antagonist is the city and a well-to-do daughter, and as far as Flannery O'Connor was concerned both were passports to hell.

Two stories in the second collection complement each other in that their titles seem interchangeable. "The Lame Shall Enter First" is the best example of Flannery O'Connor's reworking of a situation, for the story is a rewriting and expansion of the second part of *The Violent Bear It Away*, omitting the preliminary farm and family history and the later return to the country. The infirmities of Rayber, the protagonist of the novel, are transferred to the protagonist of the story, Rufus Johnson, a boy with a club foot, a bad past, and not a trace of Southern charm. He remains a mystery to Sheppard, the welfare officer determined to rescue the boy's I.Q. from his circumstances and his religion; the attention is on Sheppard, an indictment of the intellect, or false education, as the chief beggetter of complacency

and "niceness." Although this view sometimes betrays Flannery O'Connor into a glorification of corn pone as the simple true bread of life, this lapse does not occur in "Revelation," a story which draws together many of her materials and states her own vision in that afforded Mrs. Turpin in the sunset by the hog pen. The tenant farmer's wife and the widow-farmer are brought together in Mrs. Turpin (though she is married), and the precocious or educated child becomes the messenger of her revelation in a typically

clotted utterance which the protagonist must ponder until it is clarified in an awful moment of truth. Mrs. Turpin has to learn that in certain essentials she is a pig of a woman, less than the trash she so despises and that the "lame shall enter first" into Heaven, before the "nice" and capable. Mrs. Turpin thus brings up the procession of Flannery O'Connor's characters which began in "A Stroke of Good Fortune." So unified is her vision that the title of the first story discussed could be that of the last.

THE SHORT STORIES OF JOHN CHEEVER

Author: John Cheever (1912-)

First published: *The Way Some People Live*, 1943; *The Enormous Radio*, 1953; *The Housebreaker of Shady Hill*, 1958; *Some People, Places & Things That Will Not Appear in My Next Novel*, 1961; *The Brigadier and the Golf Widow*, 1964

John Cheever is an important short story writer for a number of reasons, not the least of which is sheer staying power, longevity. His first stories appeared in print nearly thirty years ago, and they have been appearing regularly ever since. This is a remarkable record of continuous creativity and undiminished quality. Though he has won prizes and widespread popular recognition for his two novels, *The Wapshot Chronicle* and *The Wapshot Scandal*, Cheever has always been primarily a story writer. There are any number of other living writers equally well known and distinguished for their work in the short story form, but none who have written stories regularly over such a span of time, a time which includes portions of at least three separate literary generations. Part of his success must be considered in terms of his long-standing position as one of the stable of contract writers for *The New Yorker*, a magazine which has always encouraged the short story, or a certain kind of short story, with high payment and the advantages of a large audience with definite expectations and conventions. But this fact alone cannot explain how Cheever has managed to keep his gift for the short

story alive and breathing while other, perhaps equally gifted writers for that magazine, though remembered and honored in short story anthologies, are no longer vigorously productive. It is entirely possible that, weighing everything, John Cheever is the finest story writer so far to emerge from *The New Yorker*.

To place his work and to understand its development it is first of all necessary to understand as clearly as possible what a *New Yorker* story is, for the vintage product has become to a great degree the accepted model for the modern American short story. Briefly it is the maximum exploitation of a single, dramatically presented incident while more or less strictly observing the conventional unities of time and place, designed in its condensed form to gain by a richness of implication and by depth of characterization. Plot, in the old-fashioned sense, is absent and so are the moral dilemmas, middle-class, of slick fiction. In setting the stories are usually regional—the East of suburbia and the City, the far and uncorrupted West, an updated version of the magnolia South and, often, foreign, aristocratic, and exotic. The stories have reflected the general moral views of the magazine and

its audience. Its moral keystone is a gracious secular humanism coupled with a gentle intellectual skepticism. The virtues celebrated are all civilized virtues, sedentary, sophisticated, and rational, gently draped or camouflaged in veils of irony. The mortal sins are vulgarity without redeeming eccentricity, self-pity, stupidity, hypocrisy, bad manners, complacency, awkward excess of passion, and the absence of good health or physical beauty. In short, *The New Yorker* fiction has been a fiction of manners. The political orientation has been generally liberal, of the *noblesse oblige* variety, and as a magazine of manners the aim has always been progressive. No matter how dark the present, how fraught with peril the future, or how quaint the past, the fiction and verse of *The New Yorker* have always gone hand in hand with the plentiful advertisements, the fine cartoons, and "The Talk of the Town," advancing toward a vaguely discernible horizon, the glow of which indicates a Jerusalem of "The Good Life" somewhere up there among idyllic Delectable Mountains, just beyond the reach of the clean, trimmed fingernails of the Ideal Reader.

To expect a great deal more than the competently second-rate from such a milieu would be folly, and to imagine that working in it a writer with the creativity of Cheever could emerge would demonstrate the gift of blind and pure prophecy. We have had enough fiction over a sufficient period of time to see that his stories, within the context of *The New Yorker* milieu, are original and independent. From the beginning with *The Way Some People Live* the stories of John Cheever in *The New Yorker* have exhibited some independence of form. This may have been inevitable, for already, even then, the "single event" story was widely anthologized, beginning to be taught in schools, and becoming somewhat less than chic. Cheever's originality manifests itself in subject and treatment. Though part and parcel of the credible and suburban world, stories from *The*

Way Some People Live and *The Enormous Radio* occasionally break that orderly universe with the introduction of what used to be called "fantasy," but more accurately might be described as the introduction of some supernatural event or condition into an otherwise perfectly rational and realistic situation. In this sense his fiction is often analogous to that of Marcel Aymé in France. Technically the stories range rather freely and widely in time and space and point of view; even in tense, which is sometimes past, sometimes present, occasionally even future and conditional. There is often a cheerfully direct and open use of the narrator-writer of the story. He appears in the open like the chorus in an early Elizabethan play. As a narrator he does his best to establish an air of intimacy and rapport with the reader, and then from time to time he re-enters, stopping the action, to point out significant aspects or to make intelligent comment. Like a cultivated and slightly condescending museum guide, this narrator is bright, clever, witty, yet always somehow sympathetic to the reader, perhaps because of his slight but pleasing smile, his habit of ironic self-deprecation, and his wry, worldly-wise shrug. The teller of the tale is always exact and up to date in his references and allusions, his knowledge of the things and habits of this world; and he can, when it is necessary, but never without a shared wink of misgiving, summon up a soupçon of the latest slang. The language of the stories is always a model of lucidity and decorum, free from the unrefined excess and extravagance of poetic frenzy, yet still able from time to time to climb toward a modest altitude on the slopes of Olympus, far below the sweaty chaos of the laughing and imperious gods and muses, but at least a place with a good view near the timberline, a place where a good gourmet picnic might be laid out and enjoyed.

Clearly, the form goes against the grain of the more typical, "dramatic" pattern of *The New Yorker* story, for most

of these devices work to call attention to the story not as a happening, but as artifice. The meaning of this relative freedom of form is equally clear. Cheever wants to say more, not only about persons, places, and things, but about what these may mean and the subtle patterns they make. Even in the earliest stories, for example, Cheever made frequent use of dreams. His characters dream and do so matter-of-factly. He has also permitted them and the narrator to digress, to reminisce, to imagine. Naturally this makes for a much more inclusive kind of fiction, at once deeper and more complex than the conventional "dramatic" method of telling a tale. It is one of his special gifts and artistic triumphs to be able to lead his characters and his readers with ease from an apparently "realistic" situation into realms of absurdity, nightmare, and farce. Perhaps this is what one reviewer meant when he tried to describe the singular qualities of Cheever. He is deeply interested in character, and he gives his characters depth and dimension, providing veils and layers of experience and being, and all the loose ends and untied laces of living, breathing human beings. Compared with most other contemporary writers, in or out of *The New Yorker*, Cheever has, as a result of his interest in and understanding of character, a good deal more sympathy and compassion for people he creates.

It is no mean feat to be a serious and, in a certain sense, an experimental writer and yet at the same time to share without much questioning the standards, rules, laws, and by-laws of a literary club as exclusive and cozy and proud as *The New Yorker*. It is more than difficult to make meaningful fiction, which is, after all, his aim, in the context of a moral world as bogus as a carnival, as insubstantial as cotton candy. For people do not live like characters in *The New Yorker*, try as they will. And its moral world is unique. In the world there may well be a system of election and damnation, but the elect are not necessarily immediately identi-

able because they are charming, gifted, well-born, intelligent, eccentric, or even innocent. Nor are they children, cripples, Negroes, or victims. The God which is predicated by *The New Yorker* and, so, in part accepted by Cheever, turns out to be a wise, well-to-do, old grandfather with a twinkle in his eye and stylish manners, lovable but a snob and not very likely of much help in times of trouble. Sheep and goats merge together in a glossy, nineteenth century pastoral scene.

Cheever's short fiction has developed not in stages, in trials and renunciations, but in a fairly straight line. The stories of *The Brigadier and the Golf Widow* differ from the earliest stories only in a slightly freer form, a swifter move toward moral allegory, and a shade more impatience with the rules he is breaking; but after thirty years and considerable success he is entitled to such liberty. The remarkable thing is how little he has changed over a long career. It now appears that very early he staked a claim, fenced it, and ever since has been exploring and exploiting it. This creates an apparent sameness about his work which might be called a disadvantage except that it must be balanced against the undeniable appeal of reliability. He does not, like some great writers, hit home runs or strike out. He is marvelously consistent and on a high level. Moreover, he does not, and does not need to, offend the reader. He writes from conviction and certainty and—not the least of his virtues for our times—from a sense of contentment. The effect is at once entertaining and restful. Every sane human being is for courage and honesty, in favor of blue skies, trout streams, butterflies, and fine old houses full of lively and amusing people. Every sane person is against suffering, pain, hypocrisy, ugliness, and sordid behavior. No one speaks out in favor of sin, and no one, no matter how reactionary, is against progress or reform, though our definitions may vary widely and deeply and our behavior vary even more.

John Cheever's fiction is, then, classical in orientation. (It is no wonder that he so frequently employs the great and timeless classical myths to heighten the implications of his stories.) He is a professional writer with an acceptable and decent point of view. If he has a dream, it is a dream of restoration and innocence, not a revolutionary and romantic vision. He conveys no desire to run for public office or to be accepted as one of the unacknowledged legislators of the world. This attitude is important, for his long and distinguished career, the undeniable artistry of his short fiction, give the

lie to the prevalent notion that an artist must be a rebel, an outsider, a boat-rocker to validate his claim to art. After all the qualifications are weighed and sifted, John Cheever stands in the front rank, among the best of the short story writers of our time. When all is said and done, for better or worse, it seems likely that his humane, graceful, and wistful stories will stand if not for the best that our artists have been able to achieve, then for the best hopes of our civilization, its long dream of life and liberty, its aim and pursuit of human happiness.

THE SHORT STORIES OF JOHN UPDIKE

Type of work: Short stories

Author: John Updike (1932-)

First published: *The Same Door*, 1959; *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*, 1962; *Olinger Stories: A Selection*, 1965; *The Music School*, 1966

Though still in his thirties, John Updike is a prodigiously talented young writer. He is a poet, parodist, critic, novelist, and short story writer who has achieved distinction and a very considerable reputation in the first half of the 1960's. His career thus far is remarkable, indeed virtually unique among the serious writers of his generation. Perhaps equally remarkable—for there are limits to the most finely tuned imagination and even though we tend to forget it we must inevitably judge others by our own experience—he gives evidence already of enough self-transcendence to be aware of the surprising good fortune which has attended all his efforts. From the first he has been a character in that rare thing, a genuine, American, real-life success story. It is the kind of thing that has not happened and does not happen to most serious American writers. One need only recall the story Robert Frost used to tell groups of eager young student writers, how a relative had offered him a living for a year, without worry or burden, to determine if he really were a poet. "Give me twenty," was Frost's reply to the as-

tounded relative. We all know, now, that it took twenty years of hard and lonely labor before Frost was able to convince a publisher to publish his poems. Equally familiar and typical is the example of William Faulkner, who wrote professionally for twenty-five years before anyone began to give him or his work any attention or to consider his work worthy of prizes and awards. Contemporary literary history would indicate that Faulkner's career and Frost's are typical, except, perhaps, for the happy endings.

Not only did John Updike become a "writer" without prolonged struggle or delay, but, with the single exception of his first book of poems, *The Carpentered Hen*, he has remained with one publisher, and almost all of his work has been published in one magazine, *The New Yorker*. Both of these facts are extremely unusual for our time. Most of our serious writers and especially the younger ones, move from publisher to publisher, not willingly perhaps, but compelled to by the complexities of the modern publishing business, which simply cannot allow a writer to grow and develop, acquiring

an audience as he goes along, over any considerable period of time without demonstrable "success."

In a sense, John Updike has been patronized by two strong and distinguished literary powers and, thus, given an opportunity to develop his talent under apparently almost ideal circumstances, saved from the simple, mundane, and frequently discouraging conditions which plague almost all other writers. Moreover, his critical reception has been uniformly good. Surely he is one of the most encouraged writers of our times. It remains to be noted that he has made every effort to justify this extraordinary interest. He is obviously a prodigious worker. He has not wasted time, nor has he failed to make the most of his advantages. There is no doubt that he is a hard working, highly gifted, and imaginative writer.

There are built-in dangers and disadvantages to this kind of success story. Talent, to be recognized easily and early, must inevitably be based upon precedent, upon a set of existing and accepted standards. For any establishment to offer rewards at the outset, the work of the neophyte must be acceptable to and, indeed, be complimentary to the establishment. Looking back in time, we should have no cause to wonder why, for example, Lizette Reese was for so long considered a much better poet than Robert Frost, why Glenway Wescott was recognized as a literary artist while William Faulkner was not. In this era of intense self-consciousness of continual "agonizing re-appraisal," it is highly unlikely that a decently educated and successful young writer would not be haunted by the specters of our recent literary past, troubled by the vague prospect that history may well be repeating itself in his case. The thought might well be inhibiting. Then there are the inhibitions which can so easily come from writing for particular patrons and an already existing audience. If these patrons are essentially conservative in literary matters, one would be disinclined to offend, to bite the hand that feeds. The mechanics of human

rationalization are such that, in order to continue to create at all, a writer would have to believe in his patrons. To question would be crippling. To rebel might be disastrous.

It is, therefore, a tribute to the skill of John Updike to report that in spite of all these factors and in spite of the fact that he has shown little interest in pioneering and innovation in any form, his work has continued to grow in stature and, so far, without the least sign of self-doubt or diminishing integrity.

It is by his short stories that John Updike is best known, and it should be observed that chunks and sections of the novels have been originally published in somewhat different form as short stories. In this practical sense, Updike's fiction is the short story. *The Same Door* is a book of sixteen well-wrought stories, for the most part conventionally correct according to the familiar formula of *The New Yorker*, observing the taboos of that magazine, careful, restrained, controlled, and unemphatic in the smooth organization of subject, theme, and structure. Though they are not "autobiographical," they derive almost exclusively from the author's pragmatic rather than imagined experience, and they modestly do not aspire to extend beyond these self-imposed limitations. There are stories set in Olinger, which he acknowledges in the foreword to *Olinger Stories* to be an only lightly disguised reflection of his hometown, Shillington. There are school stories, stories of the pains and pleasures of adolescence, stories set in Oxford, and stories involving young married couples in New York. With the exception of the final story in the book, "The Happiest I've Been," each of these stories is almost a textbook example of *The New Yorker* story, the expanded anecdote, the significant sketch, told in a straightforward and uncomplicated manner, following the accepted convention of the dramatic presentation with a reasonable unity of time and place. Usually Updike employs a third-person narrator for whom, as a result of the

things which happen, there is likely to be an ever so slight re-arrangement of the structure of his sensibility. They are fixed, at once precisely and evocatively, in time by the convention of reference to things—the books, fads and fashions, brand names, and popular songs of a particular moment in time. Nevertheless, the essential mood of all the stories, in fact explicitly stated, is memory, unabashed nostalgia, of shards dug up, cleaned and polished, then elegantly displayed against the ruins of time. Time, mutability, the natural process of change and decay are the principal forces against which the human protagonists must wrestle. It is unfair to point out that this drama is a slight one, like the small child who cries against a rainy day, for it has a long and honored tradition and great writers have made much of it. It is fair, however, to remark that such a theme allows for only small action and diminutive moral drama. Morality, good and evil, appears only insofar as it relates to the overriding concern of the single perceptive self in time. The moral world is, then, greatly simplified. What is bad is likely to be vulgarity, stupidity, ugliness, results of imposed conditions rather than active choices.

There is wit and some humor as well in this first book, but basically all of the stories are extremely serious, exemplary of high seriousness and earnestness applied to simple and commonplace experiences of life, at best succeeding in giving a glimpse of the extraordinary mystery at the heart of things, though always in danger, teetering close to the sheer edge of solemnity and the incorrigibly sentimental. It is this seriousness which has impressed Updike's enthusiastic critics most uniformly.

But none of these things would be enough to lift John Updike to official stardom in the established literary firmament. There are a number of qualities which make *The Same Door* a good deal more significant than several other and roughly similar collections by young writers. His style and verbal felicity are vitally

important to the overall effect. Updike is a poet and a good one. A poet's love of language and the exact shadings and connotations of the right word emerges in sentence after sentence. He displays, as well, a poet's ear, an aptness of dialogue, a breathtaking sense of the intricate rhythms of prose. Moreover, he demonstrates a superb visual sense, not surprising since he has studied art professionally, an ability to compose a scene or to evoke a person, place, or thing memorably with a few carefully sketched details. The final effect of all these virtues is a haunting quality of evocation, which fits his theme and mood with admirable decorum and, overwhelming all else, leaves a lapidary ambience, a feeling of great richness and beauty, a luminous purity brimming with an inner light.

The Same Door, however, is not the whole story by any means. *Pigeon Feathers* represents a new and expanded use of his talent. It is another example of the atypical quality of Updike's literary career. Most writers in our time have begun with experiment and innovation and moved gradually toward the use of a developed style to explore other interests. Typically, *Pigeon Feathers* would be a first collection of stories, though, realistically, it would have been extremely difficult to publish as such. It is important that with *The Same Door* Updike passed all the academic tests. He had "become a 'writer.'" With his chevron of achievement he has been able to carry patron and audience with him into more adventurous directions in both form and subject matter. Again his basic theme, stated in a functional epigraph from Kafka, is memory, but now there is a difference. There are the apparently conventional stories, including the title story, which lead off the book, but even they are slightly off center when compared to the earlier stories. There are frankly, more explicitly, autobiographical stories, and the first-person narration, used only sparingly in *The Same Door* is here used freely and easily and often. But most sig-

nificantly there are varieties and exercises in the form and structure of the short story, which, while hardly new, are very new for Updike and quite new for *The New Yorker*. He has an epistolary story in "Dear Alexandros." He employs the method of dramatic monologue in "A & P," "Archangel," and "Lifeguard." There is a mild story of social consciousness in "The Doctor's Wife." There are, perhaps most successfully, a group of personal reminiscences which are transmuted into a form of fiction as in "The Crow in the Woods" and the almost essay-like concluding stories—"The Blessed Man of Boston, My Grandmother's Thimble, Fanning Island," and the second, "Packed Dirt, Churchgoing, A Dying Cat, A Traded Car." To make these work as stories requires all his natural and acquired skill and, as well, requires of the reader a more than casual interest not only in the perceptions of the author but also in his life, a rhetorical demand which would be impossible if he were not already known as a writer and a worthy one. To do this at all requires great skill and daring and no little bravado. To do so as a very young man, still at the beginning of what can be a long career, is an example of real artistic courage. In fairness to the many other fine story writers of our time, it must be pointed out that his experiments are not radical and are, in large part, derivative. Yet they represent in many cases the first successful popularization of methods and techniques which have in the past been the exclusive domain of the little magazines. Other writers of the short

story owe John Updike their gratitude even though he came late to the task; and even if his artistry has been overpraised by his admirers and often praised for the wrong reasons, there is no denying that Updike is a skilled and serious short story writer.

Though Updike seems a writer marked for success, it is impossible to predict where he may go or want to go in the future. He admits in the foreword to *Olinger Stories* that he is at a turning point in his career. There are many directions possible for him to take. There are many things he has not done or tried as yet. He is certainly ready and able to try them, and it is possible that he may manage to break the spell which has prevented American writers from reaching an audience and establishing any sort of dialogue with it until they were safely dead or thoroughly old and gray. His opportunities are magnificent, but there is an element of suspense; for there are real dangers and temptations ahead—the pride that dogs the successful like a shadow, the belief that virtue is rewarded which can turn a lucky man into a slave of fortune, and, not least, the very limitations of sensibility and imagination which are the burden of most of his fiction, limitations which increase as method hardens into habit. John Updike has already earned a place. Whether he is willing to risk the security of that perch or, in fact, bear the outrageous assaults of fortune, which, as much as the mutability he dreads, rules the temporal world, remains to be seen.

THE SHORT STORIES OF PETER TAYLOR

Author: Peter Taylor (1917-)

First published: *A Long Fourth and Other Stories*, 1948; *The Widows of Thornton*, 1954; *Happy Families Are All Alike*, 1959; *Miss Leonora When Last Seen and Other Stories*, 1964

Peter Taylor's first published collection of seven short stories, *A Long Fourth and Other Stories*, was described by Robert Penn Warren as the product of a "disen-

chanted mind." This cool viewpoint has characterized his four books of short stories, a novel, and two plays. Taylor's increasing literary stature, however, is

based chiefly on the skill with which that view is expressed and the flawless technique of his short fiction.

The world which Taylor views, and expresses just short of social satire, is chiefly the modern upper South in its small-town or equivalent suburban setting. His middle-class characters consider themselves a cut above middle class, since on a small-town social scale they are sometimes the next best thing to gentry and are probably charter members of the town's first country club. They have, for example, the gentry's adherence to blood and bone and family; but their plantations are likely to be neat houses on green lawns, and their ancestral memories may be conveniently short. The Old South fabric of family is still there, but fading and threadbare, in imminent danger of being chopped up by modern scissors and sewed into something for practical usage around the house.

In fact, one might view Taylor's world as a recent island risen out of Faulknerian seas. The theme of land, that rural hold upon the heart, survives in Taylor; but the reader catches barely a sniff of the barnyard, now safely pushed beyond these city limit lines. The family, not merely falling into ruins now, is several generations along and better adjusted to commercialism, or at least it has more muted maladjustments. Tales of aristocracy and historical grief are still told by the old to the young but in a calmer voice. The role of the woman and the Negro in society remains unsettled, but in Taylor's world the terms in which each is discussed have become less simple, less basic, more "civilized." Taylor's characters suspect there are no easy solutions to find, no such thing as "woman's role" or "Negro's place." The Faulkner themes have been updated, dragged forward a few years in time; and there is less despair when the Old Order clashes with the New in Southern society. It has already clashed and does clash, but despair slides over into what Warren called "disenchantment." Taylor's response to his

contemporary South is less impassioned grief than melancholy, less rage than irony.

Some of these generalizations about Peter Taylor's fictional world were justified in his earliest stories. In "A Long Fourth," the title story of his first book, a son brings into his Southern family household an "intellectual" New York girl friend. The tensions of their holiday visit are set against the continuing hidden tensions between the mother and her Negro servant. Here is sentiment opposed to youth's embarrassment by sentiment, familiar attachments set against uneasy independence. The author deals almost tenderly with all his characters, including that generation which has not and never will catch up with the times. He describes Harriet's feeling that her children do not exist any longer; it is as if they died in childhood, never growing up at all.

Other stories which express this tangle of yesterday and today, would include "A Spinster's Tale," the story of a motherless girl alienated in an all-male household; "The Scoutmaster," a picture of domestic crisis performed against a backdrop of Southern nobility (this story includes near-comic creation Uncle Jake, who bears a certain resemblance to Harriet), and "The Fancy Woman."

The latter story is probably Taylor's best known and most widely anthologized story. Written in 1940, it is the funny, bittersweet, pitiful account of Josie Carlson's weekend stay on a plantation outside Memphis with an oaf named George. The "fancy woman's" visit is interrupted and altered by the arrival of George's two teenage sons and a set of shallow, good-time suburban friends. As one critic has said, this story holds intimations of a society disintegrating and of a tradition that was never wholly perfect or sustaining being replaced by something even less so.

The Taylor countryside, then, is one of Southern change. His characters are either changing or wearing under their

refusal to do so. He picks up the Faulkner mood several degrees removed from violent upheaval and sets it down in a semi-industrialized, half-accepting, half-reluctant time.

It is not surprising that the style Taylor employs in his short stories should be consistent with their mood and setting. A reader's initial reaction may be almost negative; technically the stories seem at first notable for what they do not do, leave out, or conceal. But the threat of violence and upheaval exists under his smooth surfaces. Most violence, much traditional plot, take place offstage. His technical skill in constructing a story, in weaving the rhythm of ordinary speech into narrative, in conveying character through meager but always pertinent bits of dialogue, is such that the technique seems to disappear. He sews up his story with an invisible seam.

One might almost say that Peter Taylor's style is a studied avoidance of style. The statement demands amplification. For example, it is difficult to imagine Peter Taylor parodied, as Hemingway, Faulkner, François Sagan, or J. D. Salinger lend themselves to parody. There is little to be plucked from his prose as "pure Taylor." This lack of stylistic effect is partly the result of the way in which he casts many of his stories in easy-flowing narrative, the distilled reminiscence of a single character. The narrator may be identified ("Spinster's Tale," "Miss Leonora When Last Seen," "A Strange Story,") or have no formal existence ("Rain in the Heart," "Fancy Woman," "Reservations," "An Overwhelming Question"). If he chooses, however, the reader can think back and mentally "retell" the story from a specific first-person viewpoint, such as Iosie in "The Fancy Woman," or Helen Ruth in "A Wife of Nashville." The style of the story itself, on first reading, seems nearly neutral, taking its source from the story and not from a single mind or pair of eyes. Nothing blurs or refracts most of the told events—they are seldom handed

out pre-digested or pre-interpreted. Peter Taylor himself is never spotted onstage adjusting the strings on the puppets. His narrative takes precedence over the language or the temptation to verbal flourishes. The style seems so natural, like conversation and the family tale, that it is clear window glass through which the action is purely seen.

Since there is so little intrusion of the author begging his case, an air of verisimilitude results. The "raison-colored carpet," for example, simply is that color. The reader is both bemused and convinced by the quiet story told in the quiet parlor.

This apparent lack of effort and muting of drama works better for Taylor than italics or exclamation points. Such quiet understatement alerts the reader, who casts his mind back looking for all those implications woven almost invisibly into the story. And when the reader does perceive, perhaps by hindsight, the delicate design, he halfway claims this as some kind of evidence of his own sensitivity.

This method enables Taylor to tell volumes through understatement. "Reservations," subtitled "A Love Story," follows a just-married couple from their bridal reception at the country club to a hotel where they will spend their wedding night. The bride accidentally locks herself in the bathroom and must be rescued by residents of an adjoining room, an embarrassed man and the woman he has purchased for the evening. Taylor, a serious writer who can be very humorous at times, conveys deftly a case of honeymoon jitters. But while Dorothy Parker in "Here We Are" did much the same thing in sharp and witty dialogue, Taylor gives the reader in very little more space a full-length portrait of the nervous bride, her feeling the prostitute is too familiar, the harsh accusations she finally screams at the exasperated groom while he struggles with the locked door. Parker wrote of honeymooners; at the end of Taylor's story the reader knows what the

whole marriage will be like. He makes what Hollis Summers once described as the effort to "realize simultaneously the tree and the forest of experience."

There is not a Taylor story which does not fulfill the dictum of short fiction to tell little but suggest much. In "Miss Leonora When Last Seen," Leonora Logan habitually dons dungarees, cardigan, and poke bonnet and drives her 1942 Dodge convertible through an assortment of states, orbiting Tennessee. The last time she drives away, unfortunately, she looks very much like a thousand others seen in small towns and on the highways. She is lost, out of eccentricity and into normality.

Aunt Munsie, in "What You Hear from 'Em?" gives up her hogs and slop wagon, but she also gives up really caring when the two Tolliver boys are coming home to live in Thornton. In "Allegiance," a Tennessee soldier in London goes to call upon an aunt with whom his family has quarreled and during the visit creates the whole microcosm of that family. In "An Overwhelming Question," a bizarre accident at the Hunt and Polo Club prevents the couple from living happily ever after, like a sleeping beauty and a sleeping prince awaking at the same moment in the same place. In these

and in other stories, what distinguishes Taylor's fiction is, as Henry James suggested, "the power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern."

This is Peter Taylor's special literary talent: to select, unerringly, the small seen moment which is a keyhole to an entire revelation. If the themes are, as suggested earlier, as broad as the changing, contemporary South, Taylor illuminates them with a single pencil-flashlight, and then another, and then another.

The change in one's homeland was expressed by William Faulkner in great intensity. Banners were furled and unfurled and armor clanked, so much so that at first it may be hard to see that Taylor's is the same battlefield a few years later, coolly viewed, more quietly described. In literary time, if not chronologically, Peter Taylor is much later than Faulkner; and where the Sartoris family bled there is already a monument or so, encrusted with pigeon droppings. It is useful for the reader to remember, however, that between the older writer and the younger one the issues differ less in substance than in approach, angle, and author's temperament in their presentations of a Southern region and its society.

THE SHORT STORIES OF SAKI

Author: Saki (Hector Hugh Munro, 1870-1916)

First published: *Reginald*, 1904; *Reginald in Russia*, 1910; *The Chronicles of Clovis*, 1911; *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, 1914; *The Toys of Peace*, 1923; *The Square Egg*, 1924; *The Complete Short Stories of Saki*, 1930

Hector Hugh Munro first used Saki, cupbearer in *The Rubáiyát of Omar Kháyyám*, as a pseudonym when, in 1894, in the manner of Lewis Carroll, he wrote for *The Westminster Gazette* political sketches later published as *The Westminister Alice* in 1902. As these literary affinities suggest, the work of Saki himself is characterized by wit, whimsicality, an acute sense of humor, and a smiling acceptance of the less delectable

truths of human existence.

Reginald, imaginary like the other characters in the fifteen *Reginald* sketches, is a type composed of several young men studied by Saki during the years he lived in London. Complacently good-looking, somewhat more than meticulously well-dressed, addicted to gossip, he moves easily, despite a strong penchant for mischief, in upper-class society. Frequenting good hotels, garden parties, and the well-

staffed homes of his eminently respectable friends, he is an earlier version of Clovis Sangrail, who observes, narrates, enlivens, or simply glances into a good many of the later stories. Reginald's escapades foreshadow the more elaborate ones indulged in by Clovis and others. After his chat, in the title story of *Reginald in Russia*, with the Princess (who looks to him as if she habitually went out to feed hens in the rain), we lose track of Reginald altogether, the following stories all being independent of him and of one another. Even *The Chronicles of Clovis*, although the stories by no means terminate the reader's acquaintance with Sangrail, owe little to the appearance, sometimes perfunctory, of that brash, clever, thoroughly uncharitable young man.

Reaching into the realms of fantasy or the supernatural, Saki can be somber, even chilling. In *Reginald and Clovis*, however, he presents his typical protagonists: young, or youthful, persons who use imagination and their wits as weapons against the oppressiveness of social ritual, respectable self-interest, obtuseness, and moral insensitivity. Sometimes nature intervenes on the side of "right," as in "The Sheep" and "The Bull." Most often the conflict becomes overt in the playing of an ingenious prank. There are irresponsible pranks such as those in "The Peace Offering," and "A Touch of Realism"; pranks justified, possibly, by the ends they achieve, as in "The Open Window," "The Quince Tree," and "Shock Tactics"; pranks even more probably justified by the offenses of their victims, as in "The Boar-Pig" and "The Talking-Out of Tarrington." The sheer exuberance of it could be said to justify Clovis' "Unrest-Cure." The children in "The Penance" have not so much played a prank as used their wits and, of course, their natural hankering for revenge, to even scores in a painfully unjust world.

All of Saki's stories are truly short. Characteristically, he manipulates a single aspect of individual or group behavior until its irrationality, absurdity, or shod-

diness is exposed. Some of his targets are shopping habits, especially those of the female ("The Sex That Doesn't Shop," "Quail Seed," and "The Dreamer"); news-mongering ("The Yarkand Manner" and "The Unkindest Blow"); woman suffrage, the Victoria Memorial, the Royal Academy, Christmas thank-you notes, horse-betting, ingenious begging, polite blackmail ("Mrs. Packletide's Tiger" and "The Treasure-Ship"). Where neither exaggeration nor stratagem will reach, Saki lets loose a fantasy guaranteed to explode a house party.

It has been said that Saki's wit is malicious. It would be more accurate to say that in a witty, sophisticated way he pokes fun at the foibles and follies of the society he knew, but without looking, it seems, for any corrective result. Even the bland exposé attributed to Tobermory, the talking cat, is unlikely to jolt anyone, least of all hardened hosts and hostesses, into new lives of charity and grace. The congregation in "The Threat" gives a respectful hearing for nearly ten minutes to a jackdaw from Wapping, mistaking him for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has been detained. Possibly Saki was being unkind to the chancellor. Possibly he was simply being sorry for poor souls beaten by previous political torturers into such a state of numb submission.

All the clues for, or against, malice are not in the stories themselves. A drawing entitled "Missionary Sunday," included by Ethel M. Munro in the biography of her brother appended to *The Square Egg*, shows mother, father, daughter, and son of a patently uninspired, obviously adenoidal family singing: "Oh, we whose lives are lighted/With wisdom from on high. . . ." The irony implicit here pervades all of Saki's writing. Yet it is neither bitter nor, ultimately, cruel. Stupid, ignorant, and unsaved though these hymn singers appear to be, they give the impression of being, also, perfectly innocent.

Instead of fulminating, Saki effervesces. Pranks, children, animals domes-

tic and savage, deceit of all kinds, the supernatural ("The Peace of Mowsle Barton," "The Cobweb," "The Wolves of Czernogratz" and "The Music on the Hill"), the supernatural spoofed ("Ministers of Grace" and "The She-Wolf"), assorted stupidities—these Saki treats, more often than not, merrily; always with a deft, light hand. Yet for all his high spirits, at bottom Saki's meanings shimmer and dart. What they are is indicated especially by his use of children. Best known, perhaps, is Conradin, whose story, "Sredni Vashtar," is more openly a struggle for survival than most. Conradin, when we meet him, is already under medical sentence, possibly arbitrary, of death. His more immediate threat is from his guardian, Mrs. De Ropp. Not admitting, even to herself, that she dislikes him, she rather enjoys thwarting Conradin "for his own good." Conradin knows very well, without letting her know, that he hates Mrs. De Ropp. To Conradin she stands for all that is necessary, disagreeable, and real in the world. For combatting these forces, he has no resource beyond himself and his imagination. Thus hemmed in, the child lavishes his affections on a hen he likes to think of as "dashing," and he transforms a large polecat-ferret into Sredni Vashtar, who becomes his religion and his god. Mrs. De Ropp, sadistic as well as narrow-minded, threatened to do away with the pets on the ground that they are a health hazard. Instead, Sredni Vashtar kills Mrs. De Ropp. Although Conradin has repeatedly prayed to his private god for this "one thing," we are not asked to believe that Sredni Vashtar answered his prayers. We need not even suppose that Mrs. De Ropp is destroyed by her own stupidity, although, in a sense, this is true. Conradin, however, feels that he has won. This time, Saki seems to be saying, imagination, pitted against the harsh realities of the world, triumphs, even though that triumph is more than any adult, in the circumstances, would have dared to expect.

In contrast to "Sredni Vashtar," "Morlvera" may seem a pallid story. Actually, it is a companion piece which, carefully considered, underlines again the importance Saki placed upon imagination. Two obscure, back-alley children name a not very lovable doll in a shop window Morlvera. To them, the history they invent for her is so vivid that when, in reality, a spoiled child tosses her under the wheels of a motor car, they know which one of her atrocities she is being punished for, and by whom.

Bertha, in "The Story-Teller," is a child without imagination enough, it would seem, to be naughty. No other hypothesis sufficiently explains how very, very good she is. And the three medals she has been awarded for good behavior, Saki takes pains to point out, are the direct cause of her being eaten alive by a wolf.

It is not that Saki's beasts are so particular. He uses a number of different kinds, in various ways, until they, like his children, seem to point the way to part of his meaning. Esmé, an unexpected hyena, mouths horribly a gipsy child who happens to be handy, before finally consuming it. The two life-long enemies of "The Interlopers" have just concluded a pact of friendship when they perceive a pack of wolves who will unquestionably devour them both. "Gabriel-Ernest" introduces a werewolf who has already made off with one child and proceeds to gobble another. Some say that in Saki there is a sizable streak of cruelty. His sister, in the biography, questions this judgment.

In his introduction to the 1930 volume of collected stories, Christopher Morley suggests similarities between O. Henry and Munro. It is true that Saki, too, had a knack for surprise endings, notably in "The Reticence of Lady Anne," "The Bag," and "The Mouse." But a more meaningful comparison can be made to the stories of Jack London. Even the biographical similarities are striking. Saki was but six years older; they died within

two weeks of each other. Both suffered from parental dislocations. Neither completed a university education. Both traveled widely; both wrote for newspapers. Both saw life in terms of a struggle against insurmountable odds. Both used wolves or other animals to exemplify that aspect of the universe which, impervious to reason, remains unalterably inimical to human survival. London's characters survive for a time by virtue of physical prowess, only to fall at last before some force still more powerful. The defense of Saki's characters is an inner strength, the power and virtuosity of imagination. They, too, sometimes suffer from enemies in nature. Groby Lington, without imagi-

nation enough to be himself, succumbs to them. Yet galloping wolves, as Saki presents them, are somehow less sinister than the slow creep of a dullness that extinguishes, eventually, the liveliness of life, as in "Tea," "Judkin of the Parcels," and "The Mapped Life."

Mr. Morley was right to call attention to "the claw of the demon-cat / Beneath the brilliant robe." But the viciousness of the claw was not Saki's. When he chose to be Saki, he chose, as well, Saki's "joyous errand." Fully aware of the shortcomings of the universe, he wrote nevertheless with the unforced gaiety of one who has been able not only to accept but also to forgive them.

A SIMPLE HONORABLE MAN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Conrad Richter (1890-)

Time: Early twentieth century

Locale: Pennsylvania

First published: 1962

Principal characters:

HARRY DONNER, a storekeeper who becomes a Lutheran minister

VALERIA DONNER, his wife

JOHN,

GENE, and

TIM, their sons

THE REV. ELIJAH MORGAN, Harry Donner's father-in-law

MIKE BARRETT, a dying Irish miner

SALLY, his wife

ISAAC GOTTSCHALL, a crippled miner

EMMA SEVERN, a girl who marries unwisely

PHILLIP RODEY, Harry Donner's friend and parishioner

JENNY, his wife

MRS. MCPHAIL, a woman grieving for her murdered son

JAKE SCHNECKE, a murderer

In *The Waters of Kronos*, Conrad Richter told the imaginatively conceived and poetically textured story of one man's journey back to the lost times and landmarks of his youth, to remembrances recalled but now beyond his physical reach. For Unionville, the Pennsylvania community of his boyhood had been buried under the waters of a great hydroelectric dam, just as the years of his early life have been covered by the deep wash of

time. What John Donner discovered at the end of that quietly told but deeply moving novel is the secret of his own mortality, the realization of how much in life is wasted and sad, how much that is beautiful and good is never recognized until it is past recall. In the end man's death, half-welcomed and half-feared, is joined to his beginning far back in the years of childhood and the place of his origins.

Although separate and complete in itself, *The Waters of Kronos* hinted at further disclosures in the Donner family, particularly of the father to whom John Donner, dying, becomes reconciled, and of the mother with whom a reunion has been promised. *A Simple Honorable Man* does extend the story of the Donners but on a different level of action and presentation. The earlier novel relied for much of its effect on time fantasy and suggestions from ancient myths. In this novel, however, the treatment is straightforward in chronology and structure.

The epigraph, taken from a letter by James Joyce, sets forth Conrad Richter's intentions to present a man of simplicity and honor. In *The Waters of Kronos* there are hints that the younger John Donner never really understood his father and that there had been some kind of friction between them. A lack of understanding appears also in the relationship of father and son in this novel, but only because the boy cannot share his father's firm and joyous belief in the everlasting goodness of God. In the end the father's example overwhelms, even if it never quite succeeds in erasing, his son's belief that the church maintains its authority by the "dark, theocratic gloom" of such phrases as "holiness," "original sin," "the blood of the lamb," and "eternal damnation." Words like these had chilled John Donner when he was a boy. But to Harry Donner the church is a citadel of strength, and he lives the life of a clergyman with all the devotion of his passionate mind and heart. In his dealings with his fellows and with God he is, as his son eventually sees him, a simple, unselfish, honorable man.

Harry Donner's way of grace is not easy. He is almost forty, married, and the father of three sons when, about the turn of the century, he feels an irresistible call to the ministry. His father-in-law, the austere old clergyman whom John Donner calls Pap-pa, tries to dissuade him. Harry Donner is too old for such a step; he is a family man; he can never hope to

obtain a charge in one of the better churches; he has his general store in Unionville and ought to be satisfied with the life he has. But in the face of these arguments he remains stubborn in his resolve. With a small legacy left to his wife and money from the sale of his store—the business had never been a success because he was unable to deny credit to the miners of the region—he goes off to West Shore College and from there to the seminary to prepare for the Lutheran ministry. In the next thirty-three years he fills three parishes. The first is Mahanoy, about ten miles from Unionville. There he has his first experience in pastoral duties, not all of them pleasant. Perhaps he expects too much of his congregation, he decides. But if the people of Mahanoy do not want to accept all that he is prepared to offer, the miners and poor people in the mining patch at Lost Run need him. There he visits the sick, comforts the dying, performs marriages, preaches funeral sermons, and in the end builds at Lost Run the church he had dreamed of. From Mahanoy the Donners go to Wetherill, where the minister finds himself caught between opposing factions quarreling over building of a new church or keeping the old one. While there Harry Donner is offered the assistant pastorate of a large church in Brooklyn, but he refuses the call; he cannot believe that the people there really need him. So he goes off to a bleak parish at Paint Creek in Cambria County. There his sons grow up and leave home, and there his wife (the mother of *The Waters of Kronos*) dies, reliving in memory her early life with family and friends in Unionville. Harry Donner serves the Paint Creek parish until his retirement. When he dies his bank balance is one dollar and thirty-eight cents.

Harry Donner is the book. Other characters enter into his story briefly but memorably, figures like Mike Barrett, the tough old Irishman baptized while he was dying of miner's asthma; Harry Gottschall, who had lost both arms in

mine accidents; Mrs. McPhail, whose son had murdered his wife and child; beautiful young Emma Severn, who married a worthless fellow and paid the minister for the wedding with a bag of snitz; Dan Singer and Dolly, his common-law wife, who refused to get married, with Dan quoting the Bible to prove his point; Philip Rodey, who was accused of stealing a pig, and his wife Jenny; the three Piatt brothers, who wanted all things their way; Jake Schnecke, who shot his best friend and then turned his gun on himself. Only in retrospect does the reader realize what a large and varied picture of experience Conrad Richter has distilled into his novel.

Tribulation, hardship, and strength of purpose fill Harry Donner's world, but humor is there as well. On one occasion he mentioned David and Bathsheba in a sermon, only to be rebuked and threatened the next day by a backwoodsman named Dave Mace, who accused the minister of slandering him and his woman. As Dave explains it, he and Sheba are not living in sin; they merely have not yet got around to getting married. Harry Donner pays for the license, marries them, and baptizes their three

children. Before long he has performed four marriages in the community and has run out of baptismal certificates.

Conrad Richter makes the story of Harry Donner the record of a dedicated, proud, upright life, one rich in sustaining values. To his wife and sons, as to members of his congregations, he is at once a source of trial and a tower of strength. A man motivated by his strong yet unostentatious love for the meek and the lowly as much as by his religious zeal, he lives the life of a shepherd according to his own simple, unyielding belief and powers. He belongs to a time when right and wrong, good and bad, were still terms of meaning, before they were blunted by Freudian psychology and sociological cant. Harry Donner bases his life and his ministry on three simple premises. First, God forgives all sins if the sinner is repentant. Second, salvation is possible for everyone through God's grace. Third, all these things are wonderfully and meaningfully true.

Even though John Donner did not always understand his father, through his eyes that humble, earnest, dedicated man is brought warmly and movingly to life in this novel.

SO BIG

Type of work: Novel

Author: Edna Ferber (1887-1968)

Time: Early twentieth century

Locale: Illinois

First published: 1924

Principal characters:

SELINA PEAKE DEJONG, a woman of strong character and enterprise

PERVUS DEJONG, her husband

DIRK "SOBIG" DEJONG, her son

AUGUST HEMPEL, Chicago capitalist, later Selina's friend

JULIE HEMPEL, August's daughter, Selina's old school friend

SIMON PEAKE, Selina's father

ROELF POOL, Selina's protégé

PAULA ARNOLD STORM, Julie's daughter

DALLAS O'MARA, an artist

So Big, considered by many to be Edna Ferber's best novel, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1925. This novel

was, in a sense, what Edna Ferber had been preparing for through several volumes of short stories and a novel; in

Roast Beef Medium, Personality Plus, *Emma McChesney & Co.*, and *The Girls* she explored a new social phenomenon, the American woman in the business world. The story of *So Big* is the story of one woman who, like any Horatio Alger male hero, raises herself by her bootstraps and makes herself a place in the world of trade and competition, although the world she conquers is but a microcosm of the great world of American business.

The title is not a reference to the major character, but to the major concern of the novel. The task that Selina takes to herself is the task typically assigned to the male tycoon, that of preparing an inheritance of education and sophistication for a son. For Selina wants to guarantee that her son will have the opportunity to live the life of beauty and culture of which she has dreamed. The result is that there are two plots which merge to form the action of the novel. The first is the story of Selina's attempt to regain the magic she had known when her gambler father was alive, painting for her pictures of life as a great game, to be played with zest. The life she is forced into after her father's death seems to promise nothing of magic, and it is only much later that she discovers that the true magic lies in the natural phenomena of life itself. The second plot is the story of Selina's attempt to create the life of magic for her son, Dirk, and her ultimate realization that no one can create magic for someone else.

The novel can be said, in fact, to fall into two distinct parts, Selina's story and Dirk's story, but the character of Selina pervades and controls the entire novel. The point of view is in the third person, but all of the action is seen through Selina's eyes, so that the reader at length loses control of his own reactions; he is not sure if they are his own or Selina's. This is an effective technique, for without any direct description Selina emerges as the clearest and most exactly drawn character in the novel. But hers is not a

complete characterization at the beginning; it is only after the entire action has been completed that her character has been fully revealed or has grown into its full realization.

The first step in Selina's development is her life with her father. He is a man who lives by the whims of fortune; when his gambling goes well he and his daughter live in the best hotels and when it goes badly they barely get by in cheap boarding houses. No matter where they live, they live every moment, savoring life as a fine meal. This ability to live is, in fact, the true legacy that Simon Peake is able to leave his daughter, and it becomes her most important possession. Her other legacy, after he is brought back to the boarding house dead from a bullet wound, is two diamonds and almost five hundred dollars in cash. With these she is able to secure an education and find the means of earning a living for herself.

Simon Peake's death forces Selina to make the step into the next phase of her life, one that is to give shape to her future. She takes a teaching position in the Dutch farming country of Illinois. In her new job she moves into environment as different from that of her life with Simon Peake as the fine finishing school Selina attended in Chicago is different from the small country schoolhouse where she goes to teach. When Selina goes to live with the Pools, she sees a life that is not a game but an unending job. There is no time in the Pools' day for magic; every minute must be spent making a livelihood from the soil: in plowing and reaping, in repairing farm tools, in cooking and mending clothes. The most striking aspect of life at the Pools', as far as Selina is concerned, is the fact that there is no time for beauty. Up to this point Selina has had only to spend her time in the search for beauty; now she must give herself to the problems of farming life, of teaching children whose parents are more concerned with their children's ability in the fields than with their ability in the classroom.

It is significant in Selina's development that even in the midst of the drudgery of this life she can find a source of beauty. Even among the hard-working Pools there is an artist. Selina gives herself to the task of introducing young Roelf Pool to the magic that life can have. She nurtures his native talents at handiwork and treasures the chest that he builds and carves for her. The chest is the reminder that she keeps with her after Roelf leaves and goes to find his own life in the world outside Illinois. It is one of Selina's triumphs that Roelf ultimately becomes a fine and respected sculptor.

Selina's ability to find beauty even in the hard farm life becomes a kind of guiding principle for her life. She marries a beautiful man, capable of beautiful acts. Pervus DeJong may be the most unsuccessful farmer in the area, but he is a handsome man who recognizes the unusual beauty that marks Selina. When she is subjected to the embarrassment of having the "pretty" basket she prepares for the box supper laughed at, Pervus bids a precious ten dollars for her box, turning the laughter to amazement. While Selina's life with Pervus is not marked by beauty, she finds it a satisfying life. She becomes enamored of making things grow; her life becomes filled with "beautiful cabbages" and asparagus. When Pervus dies she takes over the management of the farm and begins to build a future for her son.

With the aid of August Hempel, the rich father of Julie Hempel, one of Selina's former classmates at the finishing school, Selina is able to become a successful truck farmer, to send Dirk to good schools, and to give him the opportunity to find the life of magic and beauty of which she has always dreamed. It is at this point that Selina's story becomes Dirk's story. The first test of whether Dirk will be able to grasp the chance to pursue beauty occurs when he is at the University of Chicago. There he meets Mattie Schwengauer, an Iowa farm girl who represents the innocent goodness of

growing things. When Dirk rejects Mattie for the social life of the fraternities, where Mattie would not be accepted, Selina receives her first disappointment. Mattie represents the naive appreciation of life that is the first step toward discovering the magic that life can offer. Dirk's inability to continue his relationship with her is a foreshadowing of Dirk's future life.

After Dirk becomes an architect he meets Paula Arnold Storm, Julie's daughter whom he had known when they were children. She is now a bored, sophisticated woman married to a man old enough to be her father. It is her influence which leads Dirk to leave his career as an architect, to leave his dreams of building beautiful buildings, to go into finance, where he is soon successful. To Selina's continuing disappointment, Dirk lives in a world of position and show. He takes a fashionable apartment and acquires an Oriental houseboy. He is, according to every conventional description, a success.

Then Dirk meets Dallas O'Mara, an artist who revels in life itself. For a time it seems that she will be the force that may pull Dirk back to the course that Selina mapped for him. She fascinates Dirk, and he is as puzzled as he is charmed by her blithe rejection of the social standards that Dirk has come to accept. A battle between the attractions of Paula's world and those of Dallas' world develops. The situation is brought to a crisis when Roelf Pool returns to Chicago in the company of a French celebrity. Suddenly the Illinois farmboy and his friend are the toast of Chicago society. Paula goes to all lengths to entertain the celebrated pair, and Dirk is drawn up short when he discovers that they prefer the company of Dallas. His world is further shattered when he finds that the person that Roelf most wants to see is Selina.

When Dirk sees Selina with Dallas and Roelf, all three laughing together, reveling in life itself, he realizes the emptiness of the life that Paula represents.

But he also realizes that he has irrevocably committed himself to Paula's world. Ironically, Selina discovers that her own life holds the magic she has always sought, for the magic lies in the seeking. Dirk, who earned his nickname by reply-

ing once to a question about how big he was that he was only "so big," discovers that there is not necessarily any magic in success. Perhaps the moral is that some people are only so big, and no bigger.

SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE

Type of work: Essays

Author: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

First published: 1870

Society and Solitude is a group of twelve essays previously delivered as lectures on various occasions and before varied audiences. Each essay is preceded by a few lines of original verse. The volume as a whole lacks the propagandistic fire of Emerson's earlier essays, though there is still a tendency to dwell upon man's better side, almost as though he had no other. Emerson continues also to see the world as filled with good for those who will receive what is offered. One of Emerson's biographers has called these late writings the cheeriest of Emerson's essays. Several are more discursive than they need be, but on many pages may be found the sparkle, wit, and happy phrasing which mark Emerson at his best.

In the title essay, Emerson makes clear that for man both society and solitude are necessary. Men differ in their need for these two opposites according to their personality and their activities. Creative geniuses like Newton and Dante needed isolation to accomplish their work. But, says Emerson, though now and then a man can and must live alone, "coop up most men and you undo them." A balance is needed. Man should not remain proudly alone nor let himself be vulgarized by too much society; one mood should reinforce the other.

"Civilization" may be considered an essay in definition since much of it is devoted to a description of what it is not and what it is. Emerson discusses both the civilized society and the civilized or cultured man. Such a man is marked by

his cumulative power, his capacity to advance upon himself, to associate and compare things with one another, to move from one idea to another as he increases in knowledge and understanding. The civilized society, says Emerson, is one which has progressed to agriculture from war, hunting, and pasturage. There are increased means of communication, a division of labor, a raising of the status of woman, a diffusion of knowledge, a combining of antagonisms, and even a utilizing of evil so as to produce benefits.

Civilization results from highly complex organization. Climate is often a major force in producing it; but, according to Emerson, any society with a high destiny must be moral. The wise man who would be civilized will use the powers of Nature which exist for him. He will hitch his wagon to a star and let the heavenly powers pull for him. He will work for the highest ends—justice, love, freedom, knowledge, utility—and the test of the civilization he lives in will be the kind of man his country turns out. In the civilized State all public action will be designed to secure "the greatest good for the greatest number."

"Art" attempts to define both Art and the Artist. Emerson begins with the simple statement that Art is the "conscious utterance of thought, by speech or action, to any end." It is the spirit's voluntary use and combination of things to serve its end; it is the spirit creative. Since this spirit aims at use or at beauty, there are the Useful and the Fine Arts. The uni-

versal soul creates all works of art and uses the individual artist to bring them into being. Thus all Art complements Nature. In the useful arts Nature is a tyrant over man, forcing him to use the tools she supplies and to learn which fit best. Turning to the fine arts, such as music, eloquence, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, Emerson points out that each has a material basis which hinders the artist who works with it. Language must be converted into poetry, vibrations in the air into music, and stone into sculpture and architecture. The art resides, observes Emerson, in the model, the plan, the harmonious arrangement of the material the artist uses. And here, as with the useful arts, Nature dominates the artist; he is the organ through which the universal mind acts. Believing in a moral universe, Emerson sees all great works of art as attuned to moral nature.

One feels, regarding "Eloquence," that Emerson devoted more space than he needed to this theme. He seeks a distinction between the eloquent man and the mere speaker, and he describes the interrelationships between the speaker and his audience. Much that he says seems rather obvious, the sort of thing a public speaking teacher might use to begin a course. The orator plays on his audience as a master pianist plays his instrument. The audience influences the speaker by its reaction to him. The consummate speaker has, to begin with, a robust and radiant physical health. He is personally appealing, and his eloquence illustrates the magic of his ascendancy over his hearers. He must have the fact and know how to reveal it; but, reaching higher, he must state the law above the fact, he must be the means through which the moral law of the universe is revealed to man.

"Domestic Life" is one of the most pleasing essays in the volume, but one is inclined to wonder what Mrs. Emerson thought of it. It begins with an amusing picture of the infant despot for whom all services are performed. "All day," says Emerson, "between his three or four

sleeps, he coos like a pigeon-house, sputters and spurs and puts on his faces of importance; and when he fasts, the little Pharisee fails not to sound his trumpet before him." But the home belongs to the man as well as the child. It must be managed by a wise economy which shall witness that human culture is its end. When visitors come, they shall not be simply fed and put in soft, warm beds; they shall see that here all deeds flow from truth and love, honor and courtesy. Although those who inhabit the home are not themselves divine, they should through their characters reveal that in each Nature has laid foundations of a divine structure upon which the soul may build. Finally, the household should cherish the beautiful arts and the sentiment of veneration. It should not, however, attempt to be a museum but only a small work of art itself, nor a church but only an intimate sanctuary for those who dwell there and for their friends who come in.

"Farming" makes some pleasant statements about the occupation, but it is by a man who was better at talking about it than at being a farmer even on a half-acre scale. The farmer, says Emerson, times himself to Nature because he cannot speed her up. He is the trustee of both health and wealth and he is the progenitor of the city men who in manufacture and trade give to the world the products of the farm. He is a continuous benefactor, a *minder* of Nature, who provides not for one generation but for all. He lives in the presence of Nature and is ennobled by it.

"Works and Days" opens with a brief survey of the scientific and mechanical tools for labor and leisure newly available to the people of Emerson's day. Emerson observes that man, having much, will have more of these; and he even predicts, nearly a half century before World War I, that the next war will be fought in the air.

But Emerson is more interested in men than in things, and it means much to him how men spend their days. As he says,

"Works and days were offered us, and we took works." Several of the best sentences in the essay are a prose rendering of the fine and now famous sonnet "Days," which precedes the essay. Like his younger friend Henry David Thoreau, Emerson laments that man wastes his days on trivia when he should write it on his heart that every day is the best day in the year and it is also Doomsday. The measure of a man, says Emerson, is his apprehension of a day.

"Books" was praised by Oliver Wendell Holmes in his biography of Emerson, but its appeal to later readers is limited. Much of it is devoted to recommending particular authors and books to be read, and these are drawn from Emerson's lifetime of reading. Memorable are Emerson's rules for choosing one's reading: "1. Never read any book that is not a year old. 2. Never read any but famed books. 3. Never read any but what you like. . . ."

"Clubs" has much about conversation but little about clubs, where conversation abounds, or should in Emerson's estimation. Emerson prizes conversation because it both takes a man out of himself and brings him into relation with others. Each talker kindles the other or others. Emerson cares little for those who must be masters of the group, the gladiators who must always win an argument, or the egotists who wish to be heard, not to listen. Emerson sees conversation as "the Olympic games whither every superior gift resorts to assert and approve itself . . . with the rest." He closes with the comment that when discourse rises highest and searches deepest, it is between two only.

In "Courage," Emerson observes that three qualities attract the wonder and reverence of mankind: disinterestedness, practical power, and courage. Courage is thought to be common, he says, but the immense esteem in which it is held proves it to be rare. Fear is based on ig-

norance, and knowledge is its antidote. The sailor loses fear when he can control sails and spars and steam; the frontiersman when he can aim surely with his perfect rifle. Courage consists in being equal to whatever faces you, in the conviction that your opposition does not excel you in strength of resources or spirit. Each man has his own kind of courage, one a fury of onset, another a calm endurance. True courage does not show itself off, and it is a bond of union even between enemies who respect it in each other.

"Success" begins with comments on the multitudinous achievements of Americans and their smug self-satisfaction with what they have done. But to show that this is the way of the world, Emerson cites the individual superiority of men in other countries and other times. What rouses his hate is the American passion for quick and effortless success, and his scorn, the boasting when one has succeeded. Drop the brag and advertisement, says Emerson, and following Michelangelo's course in life, confide in yourself and be something of worth and value. Then, as if he were rephrasing a passage from his earlier "Self-Reliance," Emerson remarks: "Self-trust is the first secret of success, the belief that if you are here the authorities of the universe put you here, and for cause, or with some task strictly appointed you in your constitution, and so long as you work at that you are well and successful."

"Old Age," which closes Emerson's book, is one of the best essays in it. "The essence of age," he says, "is intellect," and experience ripens slowly. Elderly men have been honored in many lands and ages because of what they knew. Age has its benefits: it has weathered the capes and shoals of life's sea; it has the felicity of having found expression in living; it sets its house in order and finishes its works, and man is ready to be born again in his new and final home.

SOME PEOPLE

Type of work: Character sketches

Author: Sir Harold George Nicolson (1886-1968)

First published: 1927

This rather slender volume is a miniature portrait gallery of people—some real, some composite, some wholly fictional—whom Sir Harold either knew in the flesh or created out of types he encountered in his long experience in the British diplomatic service. He was born in Teheran and moved about in the Balkan and Mediterranean worlds as his father, Lord Carnock, was shifted from one diplomatic post to another. He himself entered the Foreign Office soon after his graduation from Oxford, and there he remained until 1929; hence, he had a wide acquaintance with people and places. From these experiences come the nine character sketches that make up the book.

The world in which these characters move is a rather specialized one: that of the Public School and the University; of European capitals before World War I or of the diplomatic chess game that immediately followed that war. Sir Harold knew many people in high places, and his duties often brought him close to the center of important events. But these events are employed only as a background against which the characters move and by means of which their idiosyncrasies are displayed. Sir Harold was more interested in people than in history; he enjoyed delving into the rich vein of eccentricity that is, or was, so much a part of the English national character, though he does not confine his portrait gallery to specimens of his fellow countrymen. There are two French exhibits—Jeanne de Hénaut and the Marquis de Chaumont.

It would be satisfying to be able to discover the thread that binds all of these little sketches together so as to find a unifying element in Nicolson's view of the human species. On a first reading, this task seems possible of fulfillment. One might say that here we have portraits of

people who, somehow or other, fail in attaining their goals in life: Miss Plimsoll aspires to be the perfect governess; Marstock, the ultimate in the Public School tradition; Chaumont, a great poet; Arketall, the ideal valet. Each fails miserably. Miss Plimsoll is detested by her pupils; Marstock ends as a mediocrity; Chaumont is a failure in literature; Arketall is dismissed. Each is the victim of his attempt to live up to a preconceived notion of his role; he is an actor cast in the wrong part. Yet there are exceptions to this interpretation of the portraits. Lambert Orme, who begins his literary career as a preposterous imitator of the poets of the 1890's, manages to shed his various outdated styles until, having been killed in the 1914 war, he is taken seriously as a poet by the "Bloomsbury Group." Jeanne de Hénaut is an absurd specimen of the Frenchwoman teaching her native language to Englishmen, yet she is a superb teacher who, although ignorant of French literature, has such an intuitive grasp of the niceties of the language that she has astonishing success in coaching candidates for the British Diplomatic Service. She actually is that which she thinks herself to be.

In reading these stories, one finds in two of them the effective use of the device of employing the ostensible main character as a glass through which we are given a view of a still more important person. This trick is best illustrated by the sketch called "Arketall." The character who gives his name to the story is a drunken and ineffectual valet hired at the last moment by Lord Curzon, who was starting for Switzerland for a conference with Poincaré and Mussolini. The misadventures of the alcoholic Arketall are highly amusing in themselves, but the real point of the story is the depiction of the amazing Curzon, a nobleman straight

out of the eighteenth century, with his rich sense of humor, his great dignity, and his vast capacity for work. In "The Marquis de Chaumont," Nicolson uses the same technique. De Chaumont is a character from Proust, a man who carries snobbishness to the level of the fantastic and who tries to combine the life of literature with the life of high society. Near the end of the story Nicolson provides a glimpse of Proust himself in juxtaposition with the marquis. Proust does not have a high opinion of the nobleman's poetry, but he does have a great regard for the number of quarterings to which the marquis is entitled. As an example of the French aristocracy, the Marquis de Chaumont is superb and should be cherished as such. Much of *Remembrance of Things Past* is summed up in this little episode.

"We make fun of what we love"; so runs the French proverb. A great part of this small book is an illustration of the aphorism, for Nicolson's wit is directed as much at the denizens of his own world as at those outside of it. He is keenly aware of the foibles of the men and women whom he encountered in Public School, in the University, and in diplomatic circles. Yet his brief picture of the

"Bloomsbury Group," where he was looked at askance because he happened to be wearing evening clothes, is equally devastating. We can see the desperately solemn faces of these super-intellectuals. Nicolson obviously had the highest regard for the ability and for the charm of Lord Curzon, yet he could describe him entering a station platform as if he were actually bearing a howdah. But to the non-English he gives short shrift: Mussolini is briefly dismissed as a ridiculous little man in a brown suit and a brown derby. History seems to have sustained Nicolson's judgment.

The real charm of the book lies in the author's wit, his gift for satire, and his skill at creating atmosphere, especially the lush atmosphere of Europe before World War I. That some of the sketches are cruel cannot be denied. Yet for each of the targets of his urbane wit, the author has a flash of sympathetic insight that, to some degree, takes away the sting. Sir Harold had an understanding of people, as a diplomat must, to which his impressive list of biographies bears witness. Compared with these biographies, *Some People* is a period piece, yet it has great charm.

A SON OF THE MIDDLE BORDER

Type of work: Autobiography

Author: (Hannibal) Hamlin Garland (1860-1940)

First published: 1917

Principal personages:

HAMLIN GARLAND

BELLE GARLAND, his mother

RICHARD GARLAND ("DICK"), his father

FRANKLIN GARLAND ("FRANK"), his younger brother

HARRIET GARLAND, his older sister

JESSIE GARLAND, his younger sister

DAVID MCCLINTOCK, his uncle

HUGH MCCLINTOCK, his maternal grandfather

PROFESSOR BROWN, Principal of the Boston School of Oratory

JOSEPH KIRKLAND, a writer who encouraged Garland in Chicago

B. O. FLOWER, editor of *Arena*

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, the novelist and editor who encouraged Garland in Boston

A Son of the Middle Border begins with the same incident used in "The Re-

turn of a Private," probably Garland's most popular short story, but more than

twenty-six years separates the writing of the two versions. The discrepancies between the two may be caused by Garland's habit of squeezing as much publication out of his materials as possible, or by Garland's tender age when his father returned from the Civil War; but about the main lines of his life from 1865 to 1893 there is little doubt. The repetition of material chiefly shows that the two series of works for which Garland is best known begin with the earliest remembered dramatic incident in his life and that later reflection showed him some of the depths of meaning contained in that incident. Garland was four or five years old when his father returned from the war; he was thirty when he first published his short story and fifty-seven when he published *A Son of the Middle Border*. This was the first of four volumes of family history which won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 and re-established him as a writer. The other three volumes are *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921), the story of his marriage and life until 1914; *Trail-Makers of the Middle Border* (1926), the story of his family before 1865; and *Back-Trailers from the Middle Border* (1928), the history of the family after 1914.

Although the *Middle Border* is strictly Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, the appeal and range of the volumes on this area is national in implication. The story of the Garlands and McClintocks, the two sides of Garland's immediate family, reaches back across the Atlantic to Scotland and forward to the coast of California. It is the American story of nineteenth century immigration and the moving frontier. Garland is himself a symbol of America at the turn of the century. Born at West Salem, Wisconsin, near the geographical center of the *Middle Border*, he moved with his parents farther west to Iowa and South Dakota. Then, obeying the counter attraction of the cultural center, he moved east to Boston and New York, eventually settling in Chicago in his middle years. In the last chapters of this volume he fol-

lowed another attraction to California, where he was later to spend his last days. In three other aspects he was also typical: he broke with the land and became a white-collar worker; he left the country for the city; and he was a model son, spending his savings on the unheard-of luxury of taking his parents, pioneer farmers, to visit relations in California, "The End of the Sunset Trail," as Garland calls it. Finally he established "the Garland homestead" in a little house in the old home town of West Salem, Wisconsin.

In the typical Garland way, the story of his first thirty years is an unreconciled mixture of beauty and ugliness, of delight in the success resulting from unremitting hack work and despair at the waste of the human soul in back-breaking labor. The saddest figure in the book is not grandfather Hugh McClintock, who saw his family break up and leave him, nor Belle Garland, the writer's mother, who like many frontier women worked till she dropped. It is his Uncle David McClintock, first seen as a tremendous physical giant, the hero of the boy Garland, and last as an exhausted wreck in California. One of the most moving scenes is that in which Uncle David plays his fiddle for the last time at the family reunion in California, and Garland realizes what a fine musician has been ground down by toil and by chasing the pioneer's rainbow, the promise of ever better land to the west. David McClintock stands for the countless thousands who suffered to make the nation. Garland's own parents could have shared the same fate. His father, at the end of the war a physical wreck, could have perished while trying to revive his neglected holdings. The fact that the story of his parents ends happily is due to Garland's interference when his father wanted to make one more shift, the fifth, to some new land in the west. The book is thus a monument to the travail of "westerning," to the grim reality behind the song that runs through the book, "O'er the hills in legions, boys." Its central ritual

is the "send-off," a surprise party for those moving on.

The memoir is in two roughly even halves, the first nineteen chapters being about life on the frontier in Wisconsin, Iowa, and South Dakota. The details are similar to those in local-color work elsewhere: ploughing, reaping and threshing, the smell of horses and sweat rising above the smell of fresh biscuits, bare one-room schools, dancing, skating, riding, reading, gatherings at the local store, the ever-present fear of crippling sickness, the tragedies of burnt barns, and death. Garland's sisters die on the frontier, leaving his mother and father alone when the boys depart. The break in the memoir comes near the end of Garland's schooling, when the family spent a year in the town of Osage, Iowa. After that the family returned to the farm and then made a final move west to South Dakota. In the meantime, Garland was drawn back to the East. After a year spent with his brother Frank exploring Boston, New York, and Washington, living on odd-jobs and a teaching spell in Ohio, he returned to South Dakota to work his quarter-section. After his brother sold his holding and left for Chicago, Garland also sold out and went to Boston. The second part of the book tells an almost incredible story of hardship, self-education, and slow success, first as a "professor" at the Boston school of Oratory under Principal Brown, then as a writer encouraged by those interested in his local-color stories, such writers and editors as William Dean Howells, James Herne, Henry George, and B. O. Flower. Most of this section is Garland's straightforward autobiography and more germane to the study of how to achieve a career by passing through journalism to literature. However, just as his first piece of writing, "The Western Corn Husking," was a real and remembered genre painting intended to be typical of Middle Border life, so much of the personal detail is seen either by Garland or the reader as illuminating the case history of

the Middle Borderer himself. This effect springs from Garland's sense of duty not only to his parents—his first literary earnings are spent on his mother's first silk dress—but even more to his people, the sons and daughters of the Middle Border.

This realization of himself as a "son of the Middle Border" came only after his first return to the West, when he met Joseph Kirkland in Chicago and was told to write fiction because he, like Burns, was a farmer who could speak the truth about rural life. A second visit in 1889 confirmed this determination and provided material for the stories that make up his first book, *Main Travelled Roads: Six Mississippi Valley Stories*, published in 1891.

In Garland's story, behind the moves of the family, the daily and seasonal activities on the farm, and the slow successes in the city, stand two figures: Dick Garland, ever westering, and Belle, following faithfully. It was the pathetic image of the latter which troubled Garland during his years in the Eastern cities, and it was probably his realization of the cost wives and children paid in pioneering which precipitated his first fiction. Although the vogue for his work did not last, Garland was able to recapture his audience when late in life he began his memoirs of Middle Border life. That his real story was capable of a happy ending was due in part to his own persistence but more to the realization that pioneering was not a glamorous adventure, as many Americans have viewed it. Toward the end of the story Garland's mother sings an old frontier song, the others joining in the chorus:

"We'll stay on the farm and we'll suffer no
loss
For the stone that keeps rolling will gather
no moss."

Garland himself was now thirty-three. When he asked his mother what he could bring her from the city, she told him that the thing she wanted most was a daughter—and some grandchildren.

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

Author: William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

First published: 1609

Although Shakespeare's sonnets are generally considered to be among the most beautiful and most powerful poems in English literature, the attention of readers and scholars has more often centered on their possible biographical significance than on the literary qualities that give them their greatness. So little is known of the inner life of the poet, so little that helps to explain his genius, that it is not surprising to find critics minutely examining these lyrics that seem to reveal something of Shakespeare the man.

The sonnet sequence was one of the most popular poetic forms in the early 1590's; modeled originally on works by Dante and Petrarch, the genre was developed in sixteenth century France and Italy and reached a peak in England at the beginning of its use there, in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, written a few years before the poet's death in 1586. Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, and many other well-known Elizabethan men of letters followed Sidney's example, paying tribute to the idealized ladies who inspired their almost religious devotion.

Shakespeare's poems, probably composed at intervals during the decade between 1590 and 1600, differ radically from the sonnets of his contemporaries in several ways. They are not based on the traditional Petrarchan theme of a proud, virtuous lady and an abject, scorned lover, and there is in them relatively little of the platonic idealism that fills works like Spenser's *Amoretti*, in which the poet's love for his lady lifts him above human weakness to contemplation of the divine. Shakespeare records a strangely ambiguous, tortured affection for a young nobleman; the emotions he expresses in his sonnets have a depth and complexity, an intensity, that can be encountered elsewhere only in the speeches of some of his greatest dramatic creations.

The narrative of Shakespeare's sequence is exceedingly sketchy. Scholars have, in fact, rearranged the poems many times in an attempt to produce a more coherent "plot" than appeared in the volume published, without the author's supervision, in 1609. It seems likely that the work as it now stands contains at least a few poems that were written as independent pieces, sonnets on popular Renaissance themes which have no real bearing on the subject of the sequence itself.

Three shadowy figures move through the reflections of the poet as he speaks in his sonnets. The most important is the "fair youth," the young nobleman. The fervor of the language with which Shakespeare speaks of his feelings for the youth has led to considerable discussion of the precise nature and possible abnormality of the relationship. It must be remembered that the Renaissance regarded the friendship of man and man as the highest form of human affection, for within this relationship there could be complete spiritual and intellectual communication, unmarred by physical, erotic entanglements.

The nobleman is initially idealized in much the same way that most poets envisioned their ladies, as the embodiment of beauty and virtue. Unlike the typical lady of more conventional sonnets, however, he proves to be false and deceptive, shifting his attention to a rival poet, whose identity has been the subject of much speculation. The sequence records the narrator-poet's despair at this betrayal and at the nobleman's affair with the "dark lady," the poet's mistress, who is, in a sense, his evil genius. It is not the loss of the lady he regrets, for he knows her character all too well, but the fact that his friend has yielded to her corruption. Throughout the sonnets the reader feels the poet's agonized sense that there is nothing lastingly beautiful or virtuous.

While it is customary to speak of the "I" of the sonnets as Shakespeare, it is, perhaps, dangerously misleading to overlook the possibility that these poems are dramatic, that "I" is as vividly conceived a creature of Shakespeare's mind as Hamlet, that the poet is projecting himself into an imagined situation rather than describing a personal experience. This question will probably never be answered, and even if it were, the solution would not alter the essential value of the poems themselves.

The greatness of the sonnets lies in their intellectual and emotional power, in Shakespeare's ability to find exactly the right images to convey a particular idea or feeling and in his magnificent gift for shaping the diction and rhythms of ordinary human speech into expressions of the subtlest and deepest human perceptions. He developed to its fullest potential the English or "Shakespearian" sonnet form, with which Wyatt and Surrey had experimented earlier in the century. Almost all of Shakespeare's sonnets are divided into three quatrains, each with alternately rhyming lines, followed by a concluding couplet. This form is technically less complex than the Italian pattern, in which the first eight lines are built around two rhymes, rather than four. The technical requirements of the two forms determine to a degree their organization; the Italian sonnet generally breaks down into two sections, with the statement of a problem in the octave and its solution in the sestet, while the form used by Shakespeare lends itself to a tripartite exposition followed by a brief conclusion in the couplet. Shakespeare was, however, capable of varying his development of his subject in many different ways; a thought may run through twelve lines with a surprise conclusion or shift of emphasis in the couplet; it may break into the eight-line, six-line division of the Italian sonnet; or it may follow one of many other patterns.

The organization of the sequence seems somewhat haphazard. Within it

are several groups of poems that obviously belong together, but they do not form an entirely satisfying narrative. Shakespeare uses his half-untold story as a basis for poems upon many familiar Renaissance themes: love, time, mutability, the conflict of body and soul, passion and reason. The first eighteen poems, all addressed to the nobleman, are variations on the theme of the transience of youth and beauty and the need for the youth to marry and beget children to preserve his virtues of face and mind in them. Shakespeare draws upon nature for images to convey his sense of the destruction that awaits all beauty, referring to "the violet past prime," "winter's ragged hand," "summer's green all girded up in sheaves." Youth becomes more precious and the preservation of beauty more important still when the poet considers that "everything that grows holds in perfection but a little moment."

Shakespeare's sense of the ravages of time leads him to a second important theme; poetry, as well as heirs, can confer immortality. Sonnet 18 is one of the most beautiful and clearest expressions of this idea:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds
of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a
date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven
shines,
And often is his gold complexion
dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime de-
clines,
By chance, or nature's changing course,
untrimm'd:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou
ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in
his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou
grow'st;
So long as men can breathe or eyes
can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life
to thee.

The same idea forms the basis for another well-known sonnet, "Not marble nor the gilded monuments of princes," where Shakespeare affirms the power of his verse to withstand the assaults of war, fire, and death.

The sonnets making up the middle of the sequence deal with many aspects of the poet's feeling for the nobleman. Their tone is almost universally melancholy; the haunting language and clear visual images of Sonnet 73 make it perhaps the finest expression of this dominant mood:

That time of year thou mayst in me be-
hold

When yellow leaves, or none, or few,
do hang

Upon those boughs which shake against
the cold,

Bare [ruin'd] choirs where late the
sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such
day

As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take
away,

Death's second self, that seals up all in
rest.

In me thou seest the glowing of such
fire

That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must ex-
pire,

Consum'd with that which it was nour-
ish'd by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes
thy love more strong,

To love that well which thou must
leave ere long.

Shakespeare pictures himself as a man aging, unworthy, despairing. Initially his friendship with the young nobleman provides his one comfort against the frustrations of his worldly state. At those moments, as in Sonnet 29, when he is most wretched:

Haply I think on thee; and then my
state,

Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heav-
en's gate.

For thy sweet love remember'd such
wealth brings

That then I scorn to change my state
with kings.

A brilliantly conceived image, in Sonnet 33, communicates the impact of the poet's loss of confidence in the youth when he turns to the rival poet:

Full many a glorious morning have I
seen

Flatter the mountain tops with sov-
ereign eye,

Kissing with golden face the meadows
green,

Gilding pale streams with heavenly al-
chemy;

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,

And from the forlorn world his visage
hide,

Stealing unseen to west with this dis-
grace:

Even so my son one early morn did
shine

With all triumphant splendour on my
brow;

But out, alack! he was but one hour
mine,

The region cloud hath mask'd him from
me now.

Yet him for this my love no whit dis-
daineth;

Suns of the world may stain when
heaven's sun staineth.

Many of the poems show the poet's at-tempts to accept the faithlessness, the fall from virtue, of the youth. While his betrayal cannot destroy the poet's affection ("Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds . . ."), it represents the decay of all good, leaving Shakespeare filled with despair as he looks upon the human condition.

There are, toward the end of the se-quence, approximately thirty poems ad-dressed to or speaking of the "dark lady." The lighter of these lyrics are witty com-

mentaries on her unconventional brunette beauty:

Thine eyes I love, and they as pitying
me,
Knowing thy heart torment me with
disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners
be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.

The overworked Petrarchan tribute to the charms of the sonneteer's mistress is parodied in another well-known poem:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the
sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts
are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on
her head.

Surrounding these relatively gay pieces are verses revealing the ambiguity and conflict in the relationship between the poet and the lady. He knows that his feeling for her is primarily lustful and destructive; yet, as he says in Sonnet 129, he cannot free himself from her:

All this the world well knows; yet
none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to
this hell.

Irony pervades the sonnets in which Shakespeare declares his full knowledge of her vices and her deceptions both of her husband and of him:

When my love swears that she is made
of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she
lies,

The poet's conflict is intensified by the lady's affair with the nobleman, and he tries to explain his reaction in the little morality play of Sonnet 144:

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me
still:
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.

To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my
[side],
And would corrupt my saint to be a
devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd
fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each
friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live
in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one
out.

The tremendous appeal of Shakespeare's sonnets through the centuries rests essentially on the same qualities that have made his plays immortal, his phenomenal understanding of the workings of the mind and his almost incredible ability to distill many aspects of human experience into a few lines. The sonnets are, in many ways, dramatic poetry; the reader is constantly aware of the presence of the poet, the "I" of the sequence, who addresses the nobleman and the dark lady forcefully and directly, not as if he were musing in his study. A brief perusal of the opening lines of the sonnets shows a remarkable number of questions and commands that heighten the reader's sense of a dramatic situation:

That thou hast her, it is not all my
grief,
And yet it may be said I lov'd her
deeply . . .

Being your slave, what should I do but
tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?

Farewell! thou art too dear for my pos-
sessing,
And like enough thou know'st thy esti-
mate

The compression of language; the vivid images drawn from nature, commerce, the theater, and many other aspects of life; the word-play; and the flexibility of

rhythms of speech that characterize Shakespeare's blank verse all contribute to the greatness of the sonnets as well. In these poems, as in his plays, he was able

to transform traditional forms and raise them to new heights by the power of his genius.

SONNETS TO ORPHEUS

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

First published: 1923

To be able to speak a language which moves deeply, to intervene in human destiny as described in the Orpheus saga, is the dream of many artists. Rilke, who explored in the majority of his works transcendental values, was forever attempting in his poems to communicate the mystery of life as a whole. At the age of twenty-five he wrote "Of the monastic life" and some of his lines express his strong desire for meditative solitude. He also made the statement that he believed in everything which had still not been said. Twenty-three years later he completed his two most important books: *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Rilke himself considered these his best works and most critics agree with his judgment. The poems are the religious testament of a mature poet.

Major parts of both books were written at the same place, the Chateau de Muzot, Sierre, Switzerland, and during the same year. The sonnets are dedicated as a funeral monument to Wera, the daughter of Rilke's friend, Mrs. Gertrud Ouckama Knoop. Rilke had met Wera only occasionally when she was a child, but Mrs. Knoop kept a diary about her daughter which Rilke read with great interest. Wera was a beautiful and highly gifted dancer, yet suddenly she declared that she would not dance anymore, and she became ill and died at the age of eighteen.

In spite of the similarities between the *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus*, there are differences which make each work an independent entity. The first line of the *Duino Elegies* asks the ques-

tion as to who, among the angels, will hear him if he cries. This question is rephrased many times. In the *Sonnets to Orpheus* we find reference to the angels only once and the lament of the seeker asking who will hear him is not repeated. Orpheus has already heard many voices; he has become the ultimate symbol for artistic expression. He is still asking questions, but he also has answers which in turn generate new questions. According to Rilke, it is only in the dual sphere of influence (*Doppelbereich*) that voices are enduring and pure. The image of the mirror serves to illustrate the ever present dualism.

The *Sonnets to Orpheus* are also regarded as Rilke's strongest plea for involvement with the secular world. His usage of Greek symbolism did not prevent him from using words which had only recently entered everyday language. He also takes issue with the industrial society, even anticipating a computerized mass culture. In spite of the menacing advances of the machine, however, Rilke feels that life's mysteries can still be discovered.

It is obvious that the poet who appeared outwardly like an alien to the citizens of his native Prague, when he promenaded along the streets, was more involved in contemporary life than most of his poetic admirers suspected. He had lived through a world war, had encountered many moderns. Paintings by Picasso, who at this time was regarded as an extremist, inspired him and he became the secretary to the French sculpture Rodin, who was then also classified as a

modern artist. In spite of his understanding of contemporary problems he considered, like his greatly admired idol Hölderlin, the German Romanticist, the mythical world of Greece to be a useful vehicle for his ideas. Orpheus represents a hero with whom he could easily identify himself. This fact again points to Rilke's prevailing dualism: his effort to be understood by the man of the machine age and his longing for antiquity.

Rilke was no stranger to suffering. Until he was six years old his mother tried to educate him as a girl. His experiences at a military school to which he was sent by his father are described as a "Book of Horrors." Suffering and seeing two sides of God and men did not lead Rilke to the usual German literary tendency to evaluate good and bad or to describe "Faustian" struggles between heaven and hell. The rapid changes of

twentieth century environment are foreseen and accepted by the poet.

The greatest strength of Rilke's poetry in all his major works is his ability to describe his relationship with every aspect of creation without sounding pretentious, strained, or dogmatic. The *Sonnets to Orpheus* is no exception. His experience of being a part of the whole makes it possible for the poet to incorporate death as a continuation of life and not as a termination point. Death can mean farewell but not elimination.

Rilke died in 1926; his grave is located near Castle Muzot. His place in German literature has been secured by his unusual combination of being able to write with a musical flow which makes the reading of his poems a matter of joy while the poet at the same time explores the depths in mankind's eternal search for elusive truth.

THE SOT-WEED FACTOR

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Barth (1930-)

Time: Late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries

Locale: England and Maryland Province

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

EBENEZER COOKE, a young would-be poet

ANDREW COOKE, his father

ANNA COOKE, his twin sister

HENRY BURLINGAME III, an adventurer, tutor, and friend of Ebenezer

JOAN TOAST, a London trollop, later a wretched drab known as SUSAN WARREN

JOHN McEVOY, her usurped pimp

BERTRAND BURTON, Ebenezer's valet

CAPTAIN MITCHELL, a Maryland planter

MARY MUNGUMORY, "the Traveling Whore o' Dorset"

The title of this extremely long, wholly outrageous, and cleverly executed novel may strike the reader as curious, and it should be explained before attempting to compass the work itself. A sot-weed factor may be defined as a merchant in tobacco. Not only does the term serve as the title of John Barth's book; it is also the title of a satirical poem published in London in 1708 by an actual

but obscure Ebenezer Cooke, "Poet & Laureate of the Province of Maryland": *The Sot-Weed Factor: Or, A Voyage to Maryland, A satyr, In which is describ'd the Laws, Government, Courts and Constitutions of the Country; and also the Buildings, Feasts, Frolicks, Entertainments and Drunken Humours of the Inhabitants of that Part of America. By Eben. Cooke, Gent.*

Poetry and innocence drive the principal character in John Barth's imaginative, ribald account of Ebenezer Cooke's character and adventures in colonial America. Twenty-seven years old when he sets out to make his way in the world, Ebenezer simultaneously devotes his life to the twin ideals of chastity and art in an age when many men wooed the muse of poetry but very few regarded virtue as a possession to be preserved and even fewer thought of it as a matter for regret after its loss. His reason for his double dedication, as he frequently explains to unlikely listeners or under strange circumstances, is mystical rather than practical or moral: he has vowed to make purity the essence of his physical as well as his spiritual being. His resolve might have turned him into a Richardsonian prig. Instead, it transforms him into an innocent in the Shandean meaning of that term.

The son of a shrewd man, a planter and trader, he has suffered in his youth the not uncommon malady of sons of shrewd men. He cannot settle on an occupation; he is adrift. The principal cause of his indecisiveness is his inability to make up his mind. No one thing seems to appeal to him more than any other; all things are equal in his eyes. His is also the malady of our modern age—an existential vacuum.

Being an awkward fellow resembling a gangling flitch of bacon, he has failed not only his father's utilitarian goals but also the goals of manhood in his lack of sexual experience. He has pursued scholarship, but cannot achieve it; he has tried business, but is burdened by impracticality. Having been sent by his father to London and apprenticed to a merchant in order to learn the plantation trade, he has frittered away his time and remained a mere clerk on the bottom level of the counting-house caste. In the meantime, because of his university background and the influence of Henry Burlingame III, his former tutor, he has drifted into the coffee-house society of the period and become the hanger-on of a pseudo-artistic

circle presided over by Ben Oliver, Tom Trent, and Dick Merriweather, toss-pot poets and low wits. Then he is offered an opportunity to sully his virginity. The offer provides him with impetus into a vocation.

At this point Barth begins to warm to, and give promise of, the Rabelaisian overtones laced throughout his novel. When, on a wager, Ebenezer is faced with the prospect of having sexual experience thrust upon him, the moment comes in the person of a rare and comely doxy of the taverns, Joan Toast. But he fails to meet the test of his manhood because he falls suddenly and completely in love with the bold young trollop. After much confusion he hurries back to his rooms. There Mistress Toast pursues him, determined to perform her function in society and collect her rightful fee, only to learn that his love for her will not allow the occasion to be marred by the exchange of money. Either she must have him for his virginity alone or she must leave. In the latter event he will still adore her, even though his remains an unconsummated love.

Mistress Toast cannot understand this display of idealism, for her experience has conditioned her to complete pragmatism in matters of sex. A dispute follows. After her departure Ebenezer composes a hymn to chastity and in committing it to paper discovers his true vocation—poetry. Awed by his discovery, he dedicates himself to purity and art.

But if Mistress Toast at the time of choice could not swallow so violent a change of diet, the cud softens in the chewing and even becomes tasteful. When she reports to her erstwhile true-love and pimp, John McEvoy, on her unprofitable hour with Ebenezer and McEvoy goes to collect a fee—whether or not she served Ebenezer carnally has no bearing in the matter; the poet has used her time—she is greatly displeased. Further, when McEvoy fails to collect and as retribution posts a condemning letter to Ebenezer's father, the girl decides in

Ebenezer's favor and McEvoy loses her.

McEvoy's letter hastens Ebenezer's departure for Maryland. Angered by the report, Andrew Cooke decides to send his son to Maryland for the purpose of overseeing the family tobacco plantation, Malden, on the Choptank River. Mistress Toast, now fully in love with Ebenezer's purity, vows to follow him. McEvoy himself is destined to be caught up in the web he has helped to spin, and he ends up in the New World. Ebenezer, unaware of those events, embarks for Maryland after obtaining from Lord Baltimore a commission naming him poet and laureate of the province, a commission which promptly involves the young man in political intrigues and which is eventually revealed as a bogus document devised by Henry Burlingame III.

Because he is the prime mover in the affairs of the novel, Burlingame deserves special attention. Among other things, he is at least part of the reason for Ebenezer's failure as a scholar and a businessman. In the boy's formative years Andrew Cooke has Burlingame in his employ as a tutor to Ebenezer and his twin sister Anna. The unorthodox methods of the instruction they received and the tutor's unusual devotion to the world have left an indelible mark on Ebenezer and Anna. When Ebenezer decided, as a dutiful son, to follow a business career, Burlingame dropped out of the picture, but when the young man launches himself into his new fate by adopting poetry as his soul's profession and virginity as his body's handmaiden, Burlingame is ushered back into the thick of things. From this point on the author uses Burlingame for everything from scene revitalizer to *deus ex machina*.

The chief story line of *The Sot-Weed Factor* is quite simple. One of the delightful things about the book is that it can be read on several levels at once. It is, on the surface, a bawdy journey through colonial history and is vastly satisfying on this level as a good tale, well told. It is a farcical *tour de force*. With a plot more

contrived than *Tom Jones*, it is an exaggerated burlesque of the picaresque novel. Barth is convinced that the novel is a dying literary form. If it is, *The Sot-Weed Factor* is its grandest requiem.

Implausible coincidence, Rabelaisian romps, confused identities are all part of the story, as are tales within the tale, much in the manner of Chaucer and Boccaccio. The outline is the loss of Malden and the stratagems that bring about its recovery. However, Ebenezer's disillusionment with the New World is even more vital to his own affairs than the Malden issue, as the laureate's rosy vision of writing an epic *Marylandiad* becomes incongruous with the realities of the rough, violent provincial life he encounters. The book can be read as a moral allegory, tracing the loss of innocence to the realities of life.

Ebenezer's vacillation between the extremes of angel and beast provides an area for the ribald humor that Barth sows throughout his book. The issue of the poet's moral struggle develops ironic perspectives. One example is Joan Toast's career. In trying to change her life's work from that of sinner to that of saint she is driven by the winds of mischance and paradox further into whoredom, and when Ebenezer meets her again he does not recognize his real love in the person of Susan Warren, the swine-tender on Captain Mitchell's plantation. Yet in the end the author manages to marry her off to Ebenezer. By this development of the plot the poet loses not only his treasured chastity but also his health, for Mistress Toast has become poxed on her way down the ladder of life.

Burlingame's search for the identity of Burlingame I and II leads to the discovery of the amazing "secret diary" of Captain John Smith. This outrageously comic secret journal details the "true" story of Captain Smith and Pocahontas; a story that should set them both twirling in their graves, but makes for the most boisterously funny reading since Boccaccio.

Barth, in another of his works, has one

of his characters remark that only in America can one have cheerful terrorism. This same theme shows up again about half-way through *The Sot-Weed Factor*, when Burlingame answers Ebenezer's question as to what he must do, and where he stands, by saying that man's sad lot is to be created by thoughtless man and birthed by thoughtless woman into a thoughtless world. Man is luck's fool, Nature's toy.

Candide had his Pangloss and Gargantua his Ponocrates; Ebenezer has his Burlingame. It is in the role of tutor that Burlingame reveals the real world to Ebenezer. In his many adventures Ebenezer sees the world as cruel, stupid, intolerant, greedy, savage, selfish, rapacious, and unjust. Barth loves the dark, nightmarish comedy of colonial history. He even bends history somewhat to suit his story, but it is this aspect of black humor that intrigues him most. In this absurd, meaningless, mechanized society, filled with its catastrophes and atrocities, man can only set up a howl of despair that comes out as laughter. Burlingame says at one point that the only things which can save man from madness are dullness and truth. Truth, being the common one, must be searched after before it can be

found. Once it is found, it must be understood and shaped to the finder's will before it can bring about his ruin. Why, he asks, does Ebenezer put as much store in poetry and purity, or Burlingame in finding his father or fighting the marplot Goode? One must make and cling to his soul, or go mad. He must choose what he will worship or hate, and he must tell the world that it is he who creates such a shadow. A man must assert himself or go mad. Burlingame knows no other course.

What basis for action is there, what justification or direction in a world such as this satire exposes? Through *Candide*, Voltaire came to know the blackness of nihilism. Barth's is a cheerful, even an optimistic nihilism, as near the end of the book, when Ebenezer explains to Anna that they must hold on to life even though they are searching all the time for a way to escape.

The Sot-Weed Factor in its final meaning is directed toward the ends of the anti-novel. Barth has abandoned all allegiance to the novel's form and has shown up its deficiencies by overdoing them. His heroes are anti-heroes; his humor is black; his form is outrageous. His commitment is exploration of the range beyond the novel.

THE SOUND OF WAVES

Type of work: Novel

Author: Yukio Mishima (Kimitake Hiraoka, 1925-)

Time: The present

Locale: The Japanese island of Uta-Jima (Song Island)

First published: 1956

Principal characters:

SHINJI KUBO, a young Japanese fisherman

MISTRESS KUBO, his mother

HIROSHI, his younger brother

HATSUE MIYATA, loved by Shinji

TERUKICHI MIYATA, her father, a wealthy boat owner

YASUO KAWAMOTO, a suitor for Hatsue's hand

CHIYOKO, a student at Tokyo University who betrays the lovers

JUKICHI OYAMA, a master fisherman who befriends Shinji

The Sound of Waves is a romantic idyl by a young writer who has moved with amazing speed into the front rank of

contemporary Japanese literature. Since the publication of his first novel in 1948 his reputation has grown steadily in his

own land, where he is regarded as the foremost novelist, playwright, and short story writer of the postwar period. It is not difficult to understand his popularity at home or the acclaim which he has received abroad. Yukio Mishima stands at the point where Eastern and Western cultures intersect, and he is bringing the Japanese novel, which for generations has remained provincial in tone and traditional in form, into the main current of world literature.

This is not to say that Mishima has discarded in his writing the classical background of Japanese fiction, for *The Sound of Waves* is both traditional and modern in the best sense of each term. The setting is a small island—Song Island—where the inhabitants follow the immemorial pattern of life among men and women who take their living from the sea. The old ways of courtship and marriage still prevail among these people, even though modern means of transportation and machinery have turned their vision outward toward the larger world. But the engine-powered boats still go out to seine and trawl as the small sailing boats did centuries ago, and the women still dive for abalone as their mothers and grandmothers did before them. There is a quality of timelessness in this way of life that the author conveys with simple effectiveness; one is reminded at times of Synge's pictures of fishing life in the Aran Islands, except that the deeper undertone of tragedy which we find in the Irish writer's plays and sketches is missing in Mishima's novel.

Instead, the author repeatedly sounds that idyllic note which we find only in the literature of younger races—in *Daphnis and Chloe*, for example, or in *Aucassin and Nicolette*. Here, in fact, are all the elements of the idyl: the fated meeting of young lovers, the delicacy and depth of first love, the separation, the tests of fidelity, the joyful reunion. These are not matters of a simple boy-meets-girl romance such as *The Sound of Waves* may appear on the surface; they belong

to the theme of the universal and everlasting which gives the novel its basic appeal.

The story is simple enough in outline. Shinji, a young fisherman who is strong beyond his eighteen years, is the provider for his younger schoolboy brother Hiroshi and his widowed mother, formerly the best abalone diver on Uta-Jima. One day, returning from his day's work with Jukichi, a master fisherman and his good friend, he sees an unfamiliar, hauntingly beautiful face among the women helping to beach the fishing boats. The girl is Hatsue, daughter of the owner of two ocean-going freighters, who has been living with adopted parents on another island; the boy cannot get her image out of his mind. The next night he visits the beautiful Yashiro Shrine, dedicated to the god of the sea and within sound of the never-ceasing waves, to pray that the god will in time make him a fisherman among fishermen, worthy of a bride like the beautiful daughter of Terukichi Miyata, the ship owner.

Shinji's prayer is to come true, but not without many trials for the young lovers. On a day when the weather is too stormy for fishing they arrange to meet in an old ruined tower. Shinji, soaked with the rain, arrives first, builds a fire, and falls asleep. He awakes to see Hatsue, unclothed, standing nearby. Innocently, she had decided to dry her wet clothes before the fire while the boy slept. The tender love scene which follows is just as natural, innocent, and idyllic as her act, for Hatsue decides that since they are to be married as soon as her father gives his permission both must remain virtuous. The incident is as touching and amusing as the encounters of the young lovers in *Daphnis and Chloe*.

But they have been spied on by Chi-yoko, daughter of the lighthouse keeper. She, unlike the naïve and wholesome though unlearned young couple, has spoiled her good nature by too much introspection and the veneer of learning she has acquired at Tokyo University.

Without an inherent sense of honor, she tells Yasuo Kawamoto, Hatsue's more acceptable suitor, what she suspects. Yasuo has also been spoiled by the gloss of culture. The whispering campaign which results must be stoically withstood by the lovers, who can no longer be together; even their innocent letters are intercepted.

Terukichi is stern, proud, but not unjust, and he is sufficiently moved by his daughter's devotion to Shinji to try a plan proposed by Jukichi. Since Shinji and Yasuo are of an age to serve an apprenticeship at sea, they are signed on one of Terukichi's freighters; the one who shows up to better advantage will marry Hatsue. Yasuo, good-natured but lazy, allows Shinji to do part of his work for him. Neither knows he is being watched. Then in a heavy storm off Okinawa, when a broken cable threatens to set the ship adrift from its mooring-buoy, Shinji swims through the rough seas to secure the vessel from disaster. Here the brutal force rather than the sound of the waves heightens the suspense. Young Shinji has proved himself. Terukichi accepts him as his son-in-law.

Readers who expected a neatly plotted story will be disappointed. *The Sound of Waves* is a collection of brief episodes and scenes unfolding like the sections of

a painted screen, and the true Japanese quality of the novel comes through in its pictorial qualities. In one sense the novel is a portfolio of Japanese prints—Hiroshige at one time, Hokusai at another, and in the fury of the storm scenes Korin—elaborately set against sea-and-mountain backdrops and portraying the world's oldest story, the search of man for his mate. One feels that Mishima has put into words what the older Japanese artists expressed in a delicacy of line traced against color and mass.

Perhaps the most disarming quality of this talented young writer is the way in which he establishes his balance of theme against the island, its people, and the time. If the scenery and atmosphere seem too conventionally exotic in some of the scenes, the lack of histrionics at other times is impressive. Shinji sets the author's point of view and never allows him to present his vision of experience from the wrong angle—this is no microcosm, no world in a grain of sand. The approach to the sea, heightened by the sound of waves, is kept in perspective, just as the hero sees it, a fertile field of blue where waves ripple instead of rice and wheat. One closes the novel with the feeling that the young couple will continue to harvest the waves.

SPECIMEN DAYS

Type of work: Autobiographical essay
Author: Walt Whitman (1819-1892)
First published: 1882

For the most part, *Specimen Days* lacks the somewhat rambling style of *Democratic Vistas*. For this reason it is easier to read than most of Whitman's prose. Composed primarily of a loosely kept diary, the work is a series of the poet's observations about his youth, the war years, and the last period of his life spent in Camden, New Jersey. Aside from containing some of the few exam-

ples of Whitman's beliefs stated clearly and laconically, it is also a worthy historical account of one facet of the war years, with occasional portraits of important political and literary figures of the time. But the most obvious value of the essay is in the portrait of Whitman himself. While it is by no means a complete account of all the events in the poet's life, it does give a vivid picture of his background,

some moving reports of his reactions to the war, and his real enjoyment of nature during his later years.

The organization of *Specimen Days* is purely chronological. At his home Whitman had a collection of papers he had written during his career, and at a publisher's request he went there to "reel out diary-scrap and memoranda, just as they are, large or small, one after another, into print-pages, and let the melange's lackings and wants of connection take care of themselves." Whitman stated that if his book accomplished nothing more, he would at least "send out the most wayward, spontaneous, fragmentary book ever printed."

In spite of this lack of thematic continuity, the essay divides itself into three distinct subjects: the first pages deal with his early years and are composed from a letter which was sent to a friend who had requested the information; the middle and most lengthy section deals with Whitman's stay in Washington during the war; and the final selections concern his observations of nature made during the years of his paralysis.

The poet begins his story by saying that he was born at West Hills, Long Island, on May 31, 1819. The son of a farmer-carpenter, he spent a pleasant childhood in what was then a rural setting where manual labor was the principal activity. The family lived close enough to the city for Whitman to be influenced by both rural and city life. When he was still quite young, the family moved to Brooklyn, where his father entered the building trade. At the age of eleven Whitman left school. At the time his interest in reading, particularly Sir Walter Scott's novels and other romances, was intense.

The poet's first job was as an office boy. Then, at the age of thirteen, he became an apprentice for the *Long Island Patriot*, owned by Samuel Clements, and later he worked for the *Long Island Star*. At eighteen he taught at county schools as an itinerant teacher in Queen's and

Suffolk counties. At the same time he contributed to the local newspapers. During the years which followed he turned again to the printing business, enjoying all the while the benefits of living in the cultural center of the nation. He also acquired an interest in the theater and the opera.

When he was twenty-seven, Whitman became editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, but left this position two years later. He then traveled with his brother Jeff to New Orleans, where for only three months he was editor of the *Crescent*. After touring the country for a time he settled once more in his native Brooklyn. There he helped to build houses while living with his parents. Also, during this period he was busy writing the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which appeared in print in 1855. From this time until the wounding of his brother in the Civil War in 1862, he spent most of his spare time doing newspaper work and revising *Leaves of Grass*.

The years which Whitman spent in Washington during the war constitute the best part of *Specimen Days*. Whitman begins by describing the uncomfortable realization on the part of Northerners that the war would not be over in a few days. He states that many Union officers, in fact, wanted to let the South have its way after the first battle of Bull Run.

In general, Whitman's recounting of the war is centered around his own experiences as a nurse in the Washington hospitals where he spent a great deal of his time after visiting his brother. Though completely sympathetic with the Northern cause, the poet's concern is for humanity and the horrible carnage which resulted from the civil strife. As the following excerpt taken from his diary on December 21, 1862, demonstrates, Whitman wasted no words in presenting a realistic picture of what he saw:

Spent a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rap-

pahannock, used as a hospital since the battle—seems to have receiv'd only the worst cases. Outdoors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the front of the house, I noticed a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, etc., a full load for a one-horse cart.

During the three years in Washington Whitman made almost daily trips to the hospitals, where he did whatever he could to assist the wounded of both sides. These efforts included writing letters to the wives, mothers, and other relatives of the wounded, bringing various assortments of gifts, food, and candies, and talking with the lonely soldiers. Among other things, the poet was particularly struck with the youth of many of the men from both the North and the South, some of whom were no more than fifteen and sixteen years of age. He was also touched by the poignant bravery which went unnoticed by the public.

Of many a score—aye, thousands, north and south, of unwrit heroes, unknown heroisms, incredible, impromptu, first-class desperations—who tells? No history ever—no poem sings, no music sounds, those the bravest men of all—those deeds.

Besides reporting the stories of particular battles such as Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and the second Battle of Bull Run, Whitman also speaks of his several glimpses of Lincoln, the troops of deserters, and the inauguration and assassination of the president. He then ends the commentary on the war with a statement which could be applicable to any war:

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession War; and it is best they should not—the real war will never get in the books.

The remainder of the essay is taken from the years spent primarily in New Jersey from 1873 to 1882, after he had

been partially paralyzed as the result of a stroke. He writes of the natural beauty of night scenes which he would sketch on evenings when he would sit in his yard. Or he describes a pond, classifies all the types of trees he has observed, or perhaps enumerates the different birds he has seen. He tells of winter scenes in New York, flowers which he can see near his home, or of a visit to Central Park.

Though these passages are beautiful, and it is easy to see the sources of much of the imagery which he utilized in his poems, the most interesting passages are those which present his frank discussions of the writers of his time.

... Poe's verses illustrate an intense faculty for technical and abstract beauty, with the rhyming art to excess, an incorrigible propensity toward nocturnal themes, a demoniac undertone behind every page—and, by final judgment, probably belong among the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling, but with no heat.

He goes on to describe some visits with Emerson, for whom he expresses great admiration in spite of the fellow poet's criticism of Whitman's approach to poetry, and he eulogizes the deaths of Carlyle and Longfellow. Also relevant to his ideas pertaining to the need for a new literature which he expresses in *Democratic Vistas* is his candid statement about American poets:

I can't imagine any better luck befalling these States for a poetical beginning and initiation than has come from Emerson, Longfellow, Bryant, and Whittier.

In effect, *Specimen Days* is a valuable essay because of what it tells us about Whitman himself, and this is precisely what an autobiographical work should accomplish. Because of its easy manner, it is probably the most enjoyable of Whitman's prose works. In addition, it assures us of the basic simplicity of the poet's personality. The contrast in style between his other prose writing or his po-

etry and *Specimen Days* demonstrates the completely intentional development of a new poetic expression which Whitman utilized effectively in his verse. On a more basic level, *Specimen Days* can be

appreciated for giving "those who care for it, some authentic glints, specimen days," of the life one of America's greatest poets.

SPECULATIONS ABOUT JAKOB

Type of work: Novel

Author: Uwe Johnson (1932-)

Time: 1955

Locale: East Germany and West Berlin

First published: 1963

Principal characters:

JAKOB ABS, a train dispatcher in Dresden

GERTRUDE ABS, his mother, who flees to the West

GESINE CRESSPAHL, an East German girl working as an interpreter with NATO

HEINRICH CRESSPAHL, her sixty-eight-year-old father, a cabinet maker

JONAS BLACH, an assistant professor of English philology in East Berlin

HERR ROHLFS, an agent of the East German secret police

The dehumanization of man has been a popular, if not overworked, theme among Western social scientists, artists, and critics for some time. Taking note of this fact, Communists have insisted that dehumanization is a bourgeois phenomenon, the inevitable consequence of a decadent class society in which the individual is exploited by the abstract demands of the economic system, and claimed that the socialist state, on the contrary, protects and enhances the person. Accordingly, the Communists have consistently prohibited their artists from experimenting with the techniques of *avant garde* Western art and required that they celebrate the proletariat in the officially sanctioned style of social realism. In *Speculations About Jakob*, Uwe Johnson, who came to the West just before his book was published, takes advantage of the techniques of cubism to expose the truth about life in a socialist state that the Communists have been so anxious to hide.

Speculations About Jakob is not an easy novel to read. The physical action, to be sure, is simple enough. Jakob Abs, a twenty-eight-year-old train dispatcher, is recruited by the East German secret po-

lice to contact Gesine Cresspahl, who has defected to the West and taken a job with NATO. Because they had lived together in the same house for several years and were like brother and sister, Jakob will supposedly be able to help persuade Gesine to pass information to the Communists. The contact is made but nothing comes of it. Although Gesine loves Jakob, she refuses to return to East Germany or to aid the secret police. Jakob is then mysteriously killed by a train while crossing the tracks on his way to work. His death is puzzling because it occurred on the morning after his return from West Berlin, where he had visited Gesine, and because as a train dispatcher he was familiar with the schedules and had walked daily across the tracks.

The simplicity of the physical action is deceiving, however, for it is never directly narrated. Johnson employs a montage of rapidly shifting points of view and time perspectives so that little of Jakob and few of the events are ever seen up close or directly. The novel is therefore an intellectual mystery in which the hunt is on for the truth about Jakob Abs by characters within the story as well as by the reader. Because almost everything

seen is refracted through the mind and memory of someone, and because, as Johnson takes care to remind the reader on several occasions, opinions are not reality, Jakob eludes his pursuers, his reality becoming lost in the labyrinths of their separate, detached minds. Thus the title of the novel—Jakob is an object of speculation known remotely from various points of view but never directly perceived for what he is in and of himself.

The novel, in form as well as in theme, is based on a vision of a radical disjunction between perception and fact, reason and reality, self and society. This disjunction permeates every aspect of the story. The family, once a stable social unit founded on intimate human relations, is broken apart, first, by the death of Jakob's father, in the war, and Gesine's mother, and then by the departure of both Gesine and Jakob's mother to the West, leaving the male remnants of a surrogate family the two fragments had constituted. The intellectual, represented by Jonas Blach, dwelling in the abstract realm of theory, has no affection for his family and nothing to contribute to solving the real problems of his fellow men. The government agent, Herr Rohlf, is kept away from his wife and child by the demands of his job, which by nature entails the sacrifice of personal considerations to the state's purposes and ideology. Most telling, however, is the absence of love in the lives of all the characters but especially in that of Jakob, who is apparently loved by two women but loses both because of politics, one being "progressive" and the other defecting to the West. In short, every person's life is invaded and corroded by superpersonal forces to the extent that all the traditional bonds between men—love, trust, honesty, and the like—have been destroyed, so that no longer does anyone experience himself or others as persons. Each is locked in the barren cell of himself.

And that includes Jakob, too. Despite the difficulty of getting an unobstructed look at him, Jakob emerges from an accu-

mulation of details and opinions as a man possessing abundant humanity. He is the triumph of Johnson's artistry. Nevertheless, *Speculations About Jakob* is the story of Jakob's death, of his progressive disillusionment and hopelessness. Descended from Pomeranian farmer stock, he has a solidity and freshness, a vigor and practical-mindedness reminiscent of his soil-tilling ancestors. Where others think about ideology, he worries over his job, deeply concerned that it be done right and that all his ability go toward solving problems that cause his fellow man discomfort. Caught up in the machinations of politics, Jakob's frustration with bureaucratic inefficiency increases; his personal relations are destroyed by the duplicity he is forced to practice; and finally he understands the degree to which the individual is pushed around by the state, by the superpersonal mechanics of an industrialized and urbanized society. He is driven to his death by the discovery that there is no place for him or for what he values in the modern world.

Should the reader be inclined to look for evidence of the failure of Communism in Johnson's novel, he will be disappointed, not because Communism is portrayed as failing, but because what is revealed as the truth about East Germans is a truth that cuts across national and ideological boundaries. Johnson has succeeded in generalizing the division of Germany into the plight of men everywhere in the twentieth century. A superbly controlled novel, *Speculations About Jakob* moves from the smallest detail and personal fact to the largest political and spiritual realities with classical objectivity, clarity, equanimity. Blending epistemological realism with social realism, Johnson writes with a cool, steady eye, recording precise perceptions honestly, unflinchingly. He is an artist of impressive intellect surveying an irrational world with reason, and revealing, soberly and quietly, the sterile ground of modern society. Where so much of modern fiction has had its strength sapped by

the disintegration of the external world into the absurd, his novel is rooted in Greek and German humanism, deriving from them a firm image of the wondrous creature that man was. But Johnson does not take refuge in nostalgia. There is only the grim fact coolly perceived. The

writer provides little pleasure and no inspiration for the proletariat, nor for anyone else either. Gesine, after Jakob's death, did not look as if she had been weeping. This is the point Johnson insists on making in his concluding sentence.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAWS

Type of work: An analysis of political institutions

Author: Charles de Montesquieu (1689-1775)

First published: 1748

Judged in terms of its practical effect, *The Spirit of the Laws* is perhaps the most important political science book ever written. It was one of the primary sources of the United States Constitution, and through that document, one of the major influences on the development of democratic institutions in Europe during and after the French Revolution. All this, it must be pointed out, is out of proportion to Montesquieu's object in writing the book, which was to analyze the various types of political institutions known throughout the world and the history of human societies; to denounce the abuses of the French monarchical system; and to encourage a liberal and more equitable monarchical government for France.

In setting out to write his book, Montesquieu's major inspirations were the works of Descartes, Malebranche, and Machiavelli, all of which he viewed with the kind of healthy skepticism typical of Montaigne. This inspiration did not give him his conclusions, but it gave him his method: a rational, descriptive, and analytic approach to the problem of the nature of the good constitution of society. Montesquieu, like most early political thinkers after Machiavelli, was essentially concerned with the problem of the relationship of right and might, law and power. Many of these thinkers however, especially those opposed to what they considered the evil in Machiavelli's "realistic" approach to politics, tried to theorize on a moral base. That is, they sought

to find the basis for the right constitution of society in a consideration of right and wrong and a natural law of right and wrong. Such an approach was alien to Montesquieu. Political society, for him, had to be based on civil law. Law should reflect what men consider right or wrong, but subjective morals and objective law are two different things. Morals, like law, are relative; what one society might consider both right and legal, another might well consider both wrong and illegal.

In considering the problem of adjusting right and might, law and power, Montesquieu did not attempt to solve the problem. He was convinced the problem could not be finally solved, but only understood and dealt with in more rational and equitable ways than had been the usage of men and societies in past periods. Thus he was no more a political moralist than he was a political utopian. Montesquieu's political theory rested on the following assumptions: 1) there is no universal solution to the problems of politically structuring a society because there are only *kinds* of solutions; 2) different cultures require different solutions; 3) whatever the solution in a given society, it cannot be arbitrary and will not be accidental; it will depend on factors in the cultural tradition, and factors of history and geography; 4) there is no ideal solution for any culture, only better and worse solutions; 5) no solution is permanent but is subject to change by conscious or unconscious action and corrup-

tion; 6) any workable solution must be the result of rational analysis of objective factors.

The book itself is vast both in terms of the ground it covers and the ideas it generates. Nevertheless, it does not, and could not, achieve the objectives set for it; the scope is too large for the author's abilities and resources. The evidence is often incorrect—a fault because techniques for gathering information were still undeveloped. Often, too, Montesquieu's interpretation of valid evidence is not logical or warranted by the facts. Nevertheless, the excellence of the book far outweighs its relatively minor defects, and it will continue to be read if only for the sake of its most important contribution to political thought: Montesquieu's discovery of the principle of the separation of powers as a method of securing justice and continuing political liberty.

Because of the great amount of information incorporated into the book, and because of the great number of subjects considered and the equally great number of ideas presented in the course of Montesquieu's analysis, *The Spirit of the Laws* has a structure that is random and difficult to perceive. It is not a formless book by any means, but it does not lend itself to a precise analytic outline. The only principal of organization that seems to hold up under examination is one based on the general curve of the meandering but slowly directed argument. One widely accepted idea of the arrangement is as follows: Books One to Thirteen are concerned with the concept of government as such, and its specific and general functions. Within this larger division are subdivisions. Books One through Eight outline the various types of governments, their essential natures, their structures and the ways their structures are maintained and corrupted. Books Nine through Thirteen discuss the functions and the purposes of governments; more specifically, Books Nine and Ten discuss the army as the protective agency of the state and the problem of

war; Book Eleven discusses ways to protect the citizen and the meaning of political liberty and considers the accomplishments of Great Britain in this area; Book Twelve is concerned with problems of individual security, the rights of property, the availability of justice and the function of legal tribunals. Taxes and taxation are the subjects of Book Thirteen.

Books Fourteen through Nineteen make up the second large section of *The Spirit of the Laws*, and in general are concerned with the effect of climate, which is seen as a function of geography on various political considerations: Book Fourteen, the relation of law and climate; Book Fifteen, civil servitude and climate; Book Sixteen, domestic servitude and climate; Book Seventeen, the relation of political servitude and despotism to climate. Book Eighteen is concerned with the effect of geographical situation and the nature of the soil on the development of law and government, and Book Nineteen discusses the relation of law to the national spirit, and the morals and customs of a nation.

Books Twenty through Twenty-five are generally concerned with economics and religion. Book Twenty presents a general theory of the organic interrelation of commerce, morals, poverty, and system of government. Book Twenty-one examines the relation of law and commerce and historical change, and Book Twenty-two comments on law and its relation to the use of money. Book Twenty-three examines the relation of population density and the development of law. Book Twenty-four discusses the effect of religion *qua* faith, doctrine, and belief on law; Book Twenty-five considers the effect of religion *qua* institution and establishment on law.

Books Twenty-six through Thirty-one are difficult to consider in numerical order. For example, Books Twenty-six and Twenty-nine, though separated numerically, seem to make up a unit on the theory of law and legislative practice; the former is concerned with kinds of law,

positive, natural, canon, and civil; the latter, with the manner of composing laws. Books Twenty-seven and Twenty-eight are more or less fragmentary considerations of various matters: Book Twenty-seven discusses the effect of time on political institutions, and the Roman law of succession; Book Twenty-eight discusses the origin and evolution of French civil law and the conflict between Germanic and Roman law. Books Thirty and Thirty-one examine the development of French feudal laws and institutions: Book Thirty is particularly concerned with laws and institutions as they evolved during the period of the establishment of the French monarchy, and Book Thirty-one is concerned with feudal law and institutions in relation to the evolution of the monarchy.

One of the most interesting and important sections of *The Spirit of the Laws* is Book Two. Here Montesquieu discusses his most famous idea, the separation of powers in the state. Basing his observations on an examination of the English constitution, which he and many other political scientists of the period considered the most advanced and just in his-

tory, Montesquieu points out that government has three general functions: the legislative, the judicial, and the executive. If political liberty is to be preserved for the individual, he says, no one man or body in the state should have control of more than one of these functions: Montesquieu's definition of political liberty is as practical and objective as his method of analysis. It is not a moral or philosophical abstraction, but a simple, relativistic statement. Political liberty—which is not the same thing as independence—is simply the right to do what the law permits. This right, the author demonstrates by reference to history and the contemporary state of affairs in Europe, is inevitably abridged when any person or governmental body falls into control of more than one of the three basic functions of government. Thus, the good constitution should be constructed so as to prevent usurpation of power. The framers of the United States Constitution accepted this observation, as they did many of Montesquieu's other positions, and the result has for almost two centuries been manifest in history.

THE STONES OF VENICE

Type of work: Art history and criticism

Author: John Ruskin (1819-1900)

First published: 1851-1853

In the three volumes of *The Stones of Venice*, John Ruskin traces the development, apex, and decline of three architectural expressions, Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance, and relates their growth and deterioration to the rise and fall of the Venetian state. He shows that the virtue and piety that marked Venice at her most flourishing found expression in Gothic architecture and that as this faith declined, her corruption was expressed in Renaissance architecture. The architecture expressed not only the morality of the state but also the morality of the individual architect and common

workmen who designed the buildings and did the labor. Ruskin believed that the artistic expression of any nation is clear and direct evidence of its moral and spiritual condition; thus when Ruskin states that since the fading of the Gothic tradition there has been no architectural growth in all of Europe, he is also commenting on the spiritual poverty of his own time.

In the first volume, *The Foundations*, he traces the history of Venice. For nine hundred years the Venetians had struggled to bring power and order out of anarchy. They succeeded in doing so

largely because they possessed a childlike religious spirit that dignified even their business transactions and brought them peace, energy, and, whenever necessary, heroes. The geographical location of the city and the nature of its maritime activities were crucial, for here the superstitious, energetic, northern barbarian and the spiritual Arab met and clashed. Here the three pre-eminent architectures of the world—Roman, Lombardic, and Arabian, each expressing a different religious view—flourished separately and blended into one another. For this reason Ruskin calls the Ducal Palace the central building of the world.

According to Ruskin, in order to appreciate or judge any architecture, one must first establish canons of judgment. To do so, one must understand the basic requirements and structure of any building. When speaking of buildings, parts of buildings or decorations, Ruskin consistently uses words such as moral, immoral, virtuous, corrupt, terms that normally are applied to people or actions. His descriptions are such that he makes buildings come alive, as indeed they were to him, visible manifestations of the souls of their builders. As a result he speaks of the three virtues required of a building as being: to act well, or do properly what was intended; to speak well, that is, record fact, feelings, history; to look well, present a pleasing appearance. He feels that the second virtue is an individual matter, depending on the character of the observer and his mood, but that the first and third are matters which can be weighed and judged according to a known standard. We should admire in architectural construction an admirable human intelligence whose work may be imperfect, but whose feelings are deep and true and honest and show delight in God's work. He then describes brilliantly the construction of the parts of a building—foundation, wall veil, cornice, roof, and apertures—and explains with great clarity not only how a part is constructed, but, more important, why. The why in-

volves not only logical practical considerations, but geographical, moral and spiritual ones as well; all these observations testify to the wide scope of Ruskin's perception and historical sense. After describing the practical construction of a building, he considers the decoration. To judge decoration, one must determine the rightness of the material in terms of function and treatment and its placement with regard to the whole. Ornament should not take for its subject human work, such as figures taken from agriculture, sailing or manufacture, for that is too self-centered. Ornament should express delight in God's work; thus, we may use the abstract lines in nature, moving from the lower to the higher through the whole range of systematized inorganic and organic forms; that is, earth, water, fire, air, animal organisms, and man. An ornament should be so fitted to its place and service that if it were lifted out and placed elsewhere, it would not be satisfactory or complete. The architect must govern his ornament and so design it that simple workmen will be able to accomplish his intention. It is his duty not to try to improve upon nature but to explain it and express his own soul.

In the second volume, *Sea-Stories*, Ruskin describes the Byzantine Period and the Gothic, and concludes with a careful, elaborate detailing of the Ducal Palace. He describes three churches, Torcello, Murano, and St. Marks. Torcello lies to the northeast of Venice, in the marshes. It was an early church built by people fleeing their pillaged homeland. Thus it was built in haste but with effective simplicity, expressive, Ruskin feels, of the great faith they placed in God. It admits an unusual amount of sun and light for such a building, a psychological need, Ruskin points out, in a people fleeing the darkness of oppression. The pulpit is built with simplicity but is sturdy and functional, and Ruskin ponders the effect of the pulpit on congregations. Such a pulpit inspires confidence, whereas many modern pulpits distract the

congregations by being too ornate or raising fears that the entire structure will presently collapse.

Murano, built in the tenth century, furnishes a particularly fine study in proportion and the use of color. The apse is heptagonal on the outside and constructed with mathematical precision. Inside, the placement of the shafts with respect to one another, to the nave and the aisles, reflects subtle, true harmony.

St. Marks was constructed in the Byzantine style during the eleventh century and underwent Gothic additions during the fourteenth century. Its peculiarity is adroit incrustation, brick covered with precious materials. This practice saved materials, expense, and weight, and it required that cutting must be shallow, so that the ornamentation had to be done with care and simplicity rather than with crude force. Also, shallow design permitted delicate shading of color. Beauty, Ruskin thought, is a legitimate offering to God, and the entirety of St. Marks, with its rich colors, mosaics, paintings, and inscriptions is one great book of Common Prayer, the poor man's Bible. Color is one of God's most divine gifts to man and one which the most thoughtful men value highly; thus, Venice was most colorful during the time of her early, earnest religion. Ruskin says that no style of architecture can be exclusively ecclesiastical. Wherever Christian church architecture has been good and lovely, it has been the perfect development of the common dwelling house architecture of the period. A style fit for a church, he felt, is no less fit for a dwelling, and no form was ever brought to perfection where it was not used for both purposes. Once St. Marks has been judged as a work of art, it must be judged for its fitness as a place of worship. If a church is too beautiful, it will divert the attention of intelligent persons from religion to admiration. Thus, Ruskin believed that effective religious art lies between barbarous idol-fashioning on one side and magnificent craftsmanship on the other.

Ruskin lists six moral elements of the Gothic style: savageness or rudeness, love of nature, love of change, disturbed imagination, obstinacy, and generosity. Gothic is the most rational of forms in that it can fit itself to all services; it is also restless, unquiet, tender, and reverent. Its most striking outward feature is the pointed arch. The Ducal Palace, originally Byzantine, was superseded by Gothic, begun in 1301, and later united with Renaissance in 1423, the year in which not only the architecture of Venice began to decline, but Venice herself.

In the third volume, *The Fall*, Ruskin discusses the moral nature of the Central Renaissance, which is corrupt, its two main immoral elements being pride and infidelity. It is a cold, inhuman form, incapable of glowing or stooping. It is highly trained and erudite and meant only for man's worship, not, as was the Gothic, for the common man or for the praise of God. Thus Ruskin stressed again forcibly his belief that a fault in feeling induces a fault in style. It was a self-centered, pleasure-seeking, and hypocritical age in that it named one god but dreamed about pagan gods, meanwhile dreading none.

Ruskin deplored machine-like work. He felt one should never encourage the production of anything in which invention has no major share. Imitation or copying should be done only for the sake of preservation. He believed that a truly religious painter or architect would more often than not be rude and simple. And the work of such a man should not be scorned for lack of perfection because the demand for perfection implies a complete misunderstanding of the ends of art. No man, said Ruskin, ever stopped until he reached a point of failure, and so imperfection is essential; it is a sign of life, of change and progress. One of the chief elements of power in all good architecture is the acceptance of rude and uncultivated energy in the workmen. He believed that many people possess, even unsuspected by themselves, talent that is

wasted from sheer lack of use. Because people cannot truly express themselves in the form of an earlier age, Ruskin hoped,

through the work of common people, for a rebirth of true and expressive art throughout Europe.

THE STORY OF MY BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

Type of work: Autobiography
Author: John Muir (1838-1914)
Time: 1840-1880
Locale: Scotland and Wisconsin
First published: 1913

Principal personages:

JOHN MUIR, naturalist
DANIEL MUIR, his father
ANN GILRYE MUIR, his mother
DAVID MUIR, his brother
SARAH MUIR, his sister

Written as it was in the winter of life, this autobiography deserves a place among the confessions and apologies which recall eternal spring. The work contains what most pleased the writer's public and what most endures with posterity, a delightful yet serious account of formative years. Universally applauded for its sweet simplicity, blithe charm, and fresh truth, the book went into nine printings in its first ten years; it remains an inspiration to the young and a pleasant reminder to the old of what life was and yet can be.

Brought up in Calvinist Scotland under the constant surveillance of a most severe but loving father and among beloved brothers and sisters, John Muir received his severest punishments for escaping into nature unaware of time or place. He recalls the many fights and frolics among his schoolmates, his early fears and interests replete with exact Scots dialect, and the school discipline which was all he was to get until his majority; but always he speaks most feelingly of the landscape and its wild inhabitants: "How our young wondering eyes reveled in the sunny, breezy glory of the hills and the sky, every particle of us thrilling and tingling with the bees and glad birds and glad streams! Kings may be blessed; we were glorious, we were free,—school cares and scoldings, heart thrashings and

flesh thrashings alike, were forgotten in the fullness of Nature's glad wildness. These were my first excursions,—the beginnings of lifelong wanderings."

But all of the wanderings did not come from his love of nature. In school he read Scottish-American ornithologist Alexander Wilson's accounts of American birds as well as Audubon's exciting description of the passenger pigeon flights, later to be witnessed by impressionable young Muir. For in 1849 Daniel Muir took part of his family to America. Only the oldest son John, a daughter Sarah, and David, a younger brother, accompanied their father; but the excitement of the journey helped to ease the sadness of leaving behind the mother, three sisters, and a brother, who were to follow after the emigrant Muirs had found a new home in the American wilderness.

The early days in America were ones of exhausting work for the youthful plowboy whose growth was stunted but whose spirits soared. At first, farm and domestic animals, as well as birds unusual to him, drew his attention. In moments snatched from work he and his brother built a boat and discovered water life, though punishment always followed for indulgence in idle ways. In this forest and water setting his theistic views took shape.

After his mother and the other chil-

dren joined the pioneers, life could have been easier if his father had not been so grasping; another section of land was added, to which the family moved. Again the plowboy and railsplitter, the only real handyman in the household, lost leisure to a seventeen-hour day during harvest season. In the winter he persuaded his father to let him read and invent early in the morning, for he was compelled to go to bed at eight in order to conserve heat and save candles. From this freedom came his inventions later to win him local fame: clocks, barometers, "early risers" in the form of bed dumpers—the latter to enable him to work and study his way through the University of Wisconsin. Always he collected and classified, observed and noted, and began the rudimentary pencil sketches with which he illustrated his nature books in later life.

His loving sister Sarah and his devoted mother tried to intercede on occasion to save John from the harsh authority of Daniel Muir. When the young man wished to go out into the world, he received no help or encouragement from his severe though sincere father. Meanwhile, loyal neighbors lent him books and

encouragement when the young genius was at his most diffident period, overwhelmed with work and anxious for his future. Once he was almost overcome by gas fumes eighty feet below the earth's surface in the sandstone well he was chiseling by hand. At the same time he read and experimented, cutting his rest from ten hours to half as much.

Leaving Portage, Muir Lake (a lovely Walden-like glacial pond), and the family homestead was a giant step for young John Muir. With a sovereign his grandfather had given him ten years before and a little money saved from farming a sandpatch of his own, he eventually left home to seek his fortune as a mechanic. But his love of learning soon led to the University of Wisconsin, where he matriculated but never graduated, so intent he was on taking only courses he needed to fulfill his dreams: mathematics, chemistry, geology, and botany. When he left the University, he felt that he was entering another, the University of the Wilderness, and beginning a botanical and geological excursion that was to continue for the rest of his life.

A STORY TELLER'S STORY

Type of work: Autobiography

Author: Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941)

First published: 1924

During his career Sherwood Anderson wrote three semi-autobiographical studies, of which *A Story Teller's Story* is the first and in some ways the most revealing of the man to whom the life of fancy was always as real as the world of fact. As in his fiction, he showed in his account of personal experience the same interest in troubled inward states and psychological depths that he presented in his short stories and novels, compassionate insights into the twisted, distorted lives of the world's misfits. In this respect he was a pioneer in American literature, interested in uncovering the frustrations,

anxieties, fears, and desires of people. He did not present characters; he gave us live, moving human beings. Anderson called his figures "grotesques." This grotesqueness was a guard against a deformity, but it was also a projection of misshapen emotion. *A Story Teller's Story* is presented on at least two levels: on one a series of enjoyable loose-jointed stories—true in one sense, fiction in the manner in which they are expanded—and on another a study of grotesques.

The book is filled with Anderson's memories, beginning with his recollections of his early boyhood in Ohio. The

first and one of the most interesting sections tells of the Anderson family. Sherwood Anderson's father, an American dreamer who could tell a marvelous story but could not be a practical man, dominates this section. Anderson often compares himself to his father on the grounds that both were meant to be dreamers, not practical men. There is a tale told by his father while he is traveling with a half-baked actor about the time he escaped from Confederate soldiers escorting a number of prisoners to a prison camp. The tale is dramatized to the fullest extent and Anderson's relating of this tale, along with the reactions of the people listening to it, is amusing and interesting. His father told the story with perfect timing in order to get the proper reactions from his audience. The fact that Anderson can reproduce the same feelings that his father produced by using all of his senses is a great attribute to his talent and skill as a writer. The idea that none of this may have happened is further proof of Anderson's skill.

Dreamers, artists, and craftsmen are the salt of Anderson's earth—the heroes. The villains of America are the money-makers. When Anderson was running a moderately successful paint factory, he decided to become a free agent. While dictating a letter to his secretary praising the qualities of his product, he decided to walk out. As an excuse, he feigned insanity and simply walked into the world and became a writer of fiction.

A Story Teller's Story contains some of the real models for the sympathetic failures, misfits, and the frustrated artists found in *Winesburg, Ohio*. Old "Judge" Turner is one of these misfits. He is now a respected citizen in a town in Northern Ohio. In his youth he had attended a college in the East. While there he had become attached, from a distance, to one of the college heroes. This student had the attributes the judge desired. If he had been content to admire from a distance, the judge's life would have been different, but unwisely, even innocently, he

had chosen to write a note to the student describing the relationship they could have together. This foolish move caused the ruination of the judge's promising life. The student showed the letter around and the judge was tagged with the word pervert. The judge stayed at the college and was graduated, but his life had been radically changed by this incident.

Alonzo Berners, another of Anderson's Ohio friends, is an invalid who lives in constant pain and drinks himself into oblivion twice a year. He leaves the town to do so; when he returns he is calm and relaxed for a time. In spite of his affliction, Berners has some great attraction. Anderson cannot understand this attraction, but people from all over the country—judges, ministers, bums, any type imaginable—come to Berners for advice. Anderson marvels at this odd magnetism Berners holds for so many people. Berners has something greater than obvious magnetism.

Anderson reveals a few of his writing methods and criticisms in *A Story Teller's Story*. As a writer, he compares himself to a mother giving birth and tells of the difficulty in cutting the umbilical cord. Once a story has been told it lives outside the teller. It sometimes happens that the story has more life than the man from whom it was born. He speaks of incessantly scribbling on always ready sheets of paper, no matter where he is, and he says that he composed "The New Englander," one of his most famous stories, while sitting in a crowded railroad station in Detroit. An episode in *Poor White* was written in a bootlegger's establishment in Mobile, while at a table close by three drunken sailors argued over the divinity of Christ. The process of writing a story was always a wonderful experience for Anderson.

He frankly expresses a devotion to the style and ideas of Gertrude Stein, a desire to emulate her in her manipulation and teasing of words. He is, he states, an impressionist, and he flaunts what he calls

the wandering formlessness of his recorded expressions, but he justifies his style by saying that through writing about important impressions he will get to the essence of things. Anderson's stories are chopped up by references and other remembrances, but it is this style that creates in the final judgment a more detailed and firm story than the otherwise straight one might give. It is this sharing of all thoughts which makes the reader more closely related to the tales as though one is hearing a one-sided conversation, not reading a book. Anderson speaks or relates to the reader and then to himself.

A devotion to the "Poison Plot," Anderson writes, is bad for the modern American writer, for the stricture of plot seems to ruin storytelling. Also, bad modern writers are likely to force their stories to show a moral or create people better than they show themselves in reality, effects which do not represent life, according to Anderson, in its true form. Anderson's stories may teach, but instruction is not the main purpose of his writing. He tells the tale. What you derive from it is supposed to be enjoyment; other than that you must find out for yourself.

In reading *A Story Teller's Story*, one must remember that Anderson was taking actual happenings in his life and the lives of others and turning them into tales. Thus we are supposedly given facts which are sometimes buried, but they serve as a basis for some completely wild stories. Anderson explains near the beginning of the book that he is the man who waits for listeners. He feels that his real presence is something of a pot-pourri of men in different walks of creative life.

Sinclair Lewis felt that those who had criticized Anderson for an absence of morality were narrow-minded. The book contains little if anything that can be considered sensual. *A Story Teller's Story* is concerned with people whom Anderson

attempts to present in the full light of reality, not as white-washed characters.

Rebecca West praised the book, especially the second section. The last part of this section, or "Note V," is a discourse on the cry "Standardization! Standardization!" Anderson felt that standardization causes impotence, for the working man can no longer create new forms in materials with his hands. Standardization also means impotence for the creative mind. To be alive is to create new forms constantly: children are created by the use of the body; fresh and wonderful things are shaped from different materials and out of pure thought. People who do not create are dead. Ford and Tamerlane are compared; both, in Anderson's mind, wanted to control man. As Tamerlane was for the ancients, so should Ford be for the modern man.

In this note there is also an ironic comment on the fact that people might as well live in houses that look alike, dress alike, eat the same food, and live on streets and in cities that look alike. Anderson states that people should be given constantly growing salaries, but that all individualism must be crushed out. Books, painting, and poetry should all be standardized. He speaks of a "great machine" which would move down a street depositing cement houses right and left, like an elephant with diarrhea.

It does not take one long to realize what Anderson is saying. The note is bitter and in it he wrote something which was tremendous, vital—a warning. Today we are very close to that machine depositing cement houses, if, in fact, we are not already there.

At his best, Anderson was anything but dull. He was clever and caught the meaning of ideas which are still lost to many writers today. *A Story Teller's Story* is what its title states. The book may be fact, fancy, or both, but first of all one must remember that Anderson was a master at telling a tale.

THE STRANGER

Type of work: Novel

Author: Albert Camus (1913-1960)

Time: The present

Locale: Algiers and environs

First published: 1942

Principal characters:

MEURSAULT, an impassive young French Algerian

MARIE CARDONA, his mistress

THOMAS PEREZ, an old suitor of Meursault's mother

SALAMANO, an old neighbor living with a mangy dog in the same apartment building as Meursault

RAYMOND SINTÉS, a casual friend of Meursault

MASSON, Sintés' friend who has a house on the beach

CELESTÉ, a restaurant operator

A MAGISTRATE, a type character who is nothing more than his social role

THE PROSECUTOR

THE CHAPLAIN

Probably the best indication of the place in contemporary literature of *The Stranger*, Albert Camus' first novel, published in 1942, is to note that in 1965, Hayden Carruth, an American poet, published a book titled *After The Stranger: Imaginary Dialogues with Camus* in which, twelve years after its publication, he finds his imagination deeply engaged with the novel in an attempt to determine what he can believe and value today. Admittedly, Carruth's title implies that *The Stranger* is no longer an adequate view of life, but at the same time it asserts that Camus' novel is a milestone in the development of twentieth century thought and literature.

Published in the middle of World War II, *The Stranger* signaled a turn in the tide of modern attitudes. Although Camus was to announce the change in mood more explicitly later in *The Plague*, a story about a town's gates being opened to hope and joy after a long siege by sickness and death, in *The Stranger* he had already begun the rebellion against the intellectualism which prevailed before World War II. That was an age of ideology, of doctrinaire politics and religion, a day for rational utopias and heavens to serve as panaceas for the ills of human society, most readily mani-

fest in the mass conversion of intellectuals to Communism and Catholicism. Camus, using Plato's myth of the cave, insisted that his purpose was to turn away from the shadows of ideology and look into the fire within his own being. Correspondingly, *The Stranger*, anti-doctrinal and anti-ideological in bias, attacks Church and state as inimical to authentic life. As such it is part of what has been called "the return to the concrete," and it stands out as the greatest work of fiction in this movement because Camus was able to embody the human import of that return vividly in a character—or, since *The Stranger* is told in the first person, because he succeeded in graphically realizing the consciousness of existential man, the archetypal human for the twentieth century.

The Stranger is a story about moral awakening. In form, it resembles the poetry of Frost, the music of Bartok, the philosophy of Bergson, all examples of contemporary art based structurally upon creative evolution, or a world in which a new and more intense life erupts from a dormant state. Meursault, in jail awaiting execution at the time he tells his story, lives in the present, experiencing and caring about only what his senses make directly available to him. He had and has

no social ambitions, or anything to say; he is not affected by what happens to others; love is meaningless, and when marriage is suggested by his mistress, he is neither interested nor uninterested. In short, he is indifferent to normal human aspirations and concerns, as detached from the conventional passions and attitudes as a human being can be. In the second half of the novel, when he is being tried for murder, Meursault is forced to justify what he has been and done. He is on trial as a human being, as a nonconformist and thus an enemy of society, for not having wept at his mother's funeral, more than he is on trial for a specific murder. His prosecution is conducted by officialdom, representing the remnants of ancestor worship, the continuity of history, and the abstract ideals society is based upon and dedicated to sustaining and enforcing. Initially impassive, Meursault under pressure to defend himself becomes impassioned. When a chaplain appears in his cell near the end of the novel to plead with Meursault to renounce this world and turn to God, Meursault, raging against the dying of the light, seizes the chaplain and yells at him that all his shadowy rewards in the hereafter are not worth one strand of a woman's hair. His new-found passion does not represent a change in conviction but a growth toward self-consciousness and self-affirmation. Meursault comes to believe in what he had naturally been; he becomes aware that he had been right all along.

The major events in Meursault's awakening are three deaths—his mother's, which occurs just before the story begins; an Arab's, which occurs at the middle; and Meursault's impending execution, to take place after the story ends. The first evokes no reaction from Meursault, although it is eventually instrumental in bringing on his own death. The Arab's death, for which Meursault is responsible but to which he also does not react, culminates the merciless attack upon Meursault by the heat and light in Algiers. When confronted on an intensely hot

beach by an Arab who stands between him and a cool stream in the shade, Meursault, in self-defense, is triggered into killing by a glint of light from the blade of a knife drawn by the Arab. He kills not out of personal malice but to resist the impersonal forces that have been threatening to annihilate him. His striking out in self-defense, however, only embroils him with society, which, in turn, also becomes dedicated to destroying him. Faced with execution, he realizes within himself an inextinguishable urge to live. Then he knows that his mother was right in taking a lover in her old age and that he had rightly not grieved over her death. In the shadow of death, Meursault has a poignant desire to be; in fact, by making all men equally "guilty," that is, mortal, and all things equally valueless, death frees him from anxiety and despair at the same time that it justifies him as an immediately and directly alive person that society, with its investment in superpersonal values, cannot tolerate.

Pressed to the wall, threatened with annihilation, Meursault refuses to submit and as a consequence discovers himself to be a rebel in the cause of concrete life, defending his simple sensuous being against the platitudes of social morality. As the fire within him is ignited and burns brightly, he becomes conscious of his estrangement from other people, who are self-alienated by the acquired attitudes learned from social conditioning, and of his identity with the universe. His way is confirmed as the way of the world, the natural, not the human world, and he is justified by reality, which in its largest and most enduring form mirrors his instinctive nature. From his ascendance into consciousness results autonomy, and the more individuated he becomes the more alienated he is from the collective consciousness, and the more obvious it is that life is its own excuse for being. It is a self-evident and sufficient good in itself and need only assert its will to be. Indeed, Meursault's awakening reverses the

moral hierarchy, producing a transvaluation in which social values are replaced by existential experience as the norm. His plea that a large crowd watch his execution and greet him with howls of execration reflects his recognition that he is and must be the enemy of those people whose existence, if indeed it can be called existence, is a prescribed role in society's masked drama. The final truth and last laugh is his, for he is free; he has lived for the right things, without illusion, for being, not for nothingness. His triumph is a victory over environment by the human spirit.

There is no alternative to life, Meursault knows; it is as much reality as man can know. The only improvement he can make upon it is to intensify and enhance it within himself through self-consciousness, but self-consciousness that is self-affirmative and not self-alienating and debilitating, as it is in J. Alfred Prufrock, T. S. Eliot's impotent anti-hero. Camus' art and thought derive from the intellectual agonizing of Ivan Karamazov over the problem of gratuitous evil. Confronted with absurdity, nothing is left to Ivan but diabolism or insanity. Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the theoretical companion to *The Stranger*, asserted, to the contrary, that when intellectual questioning leads to negation, it was to be regarded as a way of thinking; the point was to live. That is the point of *The Stranger*. It assigns to life the direct, immediate, existential encounter with the concrete, the ultimate value.

One may deplore the minimal humanity of *The Stranger*; the fact, for example, that not Marie (who exists as a red and white striped dress rather than as a person for Meursault) but a strand of a woman's hair is defended as the alternative to the chaplain's otherworldly values. It is this indifference to humanity that Hayden Carruth thought necessary to pass beyond. But Camus thought so too, and did in *The Plague* and *The Fall*. Nevertheless he could not have done so convincingly, nor could Hayden Carruth or any other thinker or writer today unless Camus had first opened the door that he did in *The Stranger*. Despite his typical French rationalism, he isolated his protagonist in order to define and affirm those qualities in man's experience too wild to be caught in intellectual or institutional nets. In *The Stranger* he returned to the original man, to the primitive source of existence. Camus saw that until man stands alone on the edge of the fenced-in social world, as Meursault does, and elevates that part of his nature which antedates social forms, unless he is in continual rebellion, he cannot establish or enter into a truly moral community. Only consciousness, kept true, fresh, and nimble by contact with the pristine, keeps Meursault from the automatism afflicting the "little robot" woman he meets in a restaurant. That conjunction is his defense of the life force against all the pressures toward rigidity, toward the socialization of man, in our technological and urbanized culture today.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Type of work: Drama

Author: Tennessee Williams (1914-)

Time: The 1940's

Locale: New Orleans, Louisiana

First presented: 1947

Principal characters:

BLANCHE DuBOIS, a neurotic young woman in her late twenties

STELLA KOWALSKI, her younger sister

STANLEY KOWALSKI, Stella's husband, a primitive, brutal man

STEVE HUBBELL,

HAROLD MITCHELL (MITCH), and
PABLO GONZALES, Stanley's poker-playing friends
EUNICE HUBBELL, Steve's wife

A Streetcar Named Desire was Tennessee Williams' third New York success, winning for its author the 1948 Pulitzer Prize and a second New York Critics Circle award. Williams won the earlier award for *The Glass Menagerie* in 1945. The play has been successful in a number of translations, notably French, German, Spanish, and Italian. One of its peculiar strengths is the attraction of the role of Blanche for such important actresses as Jessica Tandy and Vivien Leigh. Also, the role of Stanley served to establish the acting career of Marlon Brando.

The Elysian Fields address of the Kowalski family is not really in the French Quarter of New Orleans, although Mitch identifies it as French Quarter in contradiction to Williams' introductory description. There was, perhaps, a concession to stage designers attracted to fan light windows and period lamp posts. In point of fact, the set designer was Jo Meilziner, and the set he produced for this play is one of the glories of his craft. Street cars, however, do not fit into the small streets of the French Quarter. Possibly Williams envisioned a drearier neighborhood, one with less color and character. The choice of New Orleans as a setting for his play comes from its transplanted Mediterranean character. In the context of D. H. Lawrence and Tennessee Williams, such an atmosphere is a good place to discuss desire.

Two street cars, one named Desire, the other Cemeteries, bring Blanche on a spring afternoon to the Elysian Fields address of her sister Stella, whom she has not seen since Stella's marriage to Stanley Kowalski. Blanche, dressed in a fluttering white garden party outfit, jars against the shabbiness and menace of the neighborhood from her first appearance. The blowsy proprietress of the building admits her to the Kowalski apartment some minutes before Stella's return. One of

Blanche's primary weaknesses is established in that brief time when, after a successful search for Stanley's whiskey, she drinks a half-glass of it neat.

When Stella returns, Blanche makes only a token effort to hide her dismay at her sister's new surroundings. Stella is happy with her wild man and regards Blanche's criticisms with good-humored tolerance. Blanche turns on Stella and defends herself against a fancied accusation that she had allowed Belle Reve, the family mansion, to be lost. When Stanley enters some time later, he greets Blanche brusquely. When he mentions her dead husband, Blanche becomes confused and shaken, and then ill. One of the expressionistic touches in the play is the polka that drifts out of the atmosphere like an operatic leitmotif whenever Blanche's husband is mentioned. Later, while Blanche is in the bath, he and Stella are free to discuss the implications of her sudden visit. Stella asks him not to tell Blanche that she is going to have a baby, a request that Stanley disregards. Stanley is suspicious over the loss of Belle Reve and imagines himself cheated of some property. He tears open Blanche's trunk looking for papers. Blanche enters, makes a pretext to get Stella out of the house, and presents him with legal papers detailing the forfeiture of all the DuBois property. Blanche demonstrates a bewildering variety of moods in this scene; she flirts with Stanley, discusses the legal transactions with calm irony, becomes abruptly hysterical when Stanley picks up some old love letters written by her dead husband. Her reaction to the news that Stella is going to have a baby is reverent wonderment.

Williams designates the third scene of the play "The Poker Night," a title he once chose for the entire play. It is Stanley's poker night with two cronies as violent as himself, and a third, Mitch, a

large sentimental man who lives with his mother. Stella and Blanche enter after an evening in the French Quarter that they have extended to two-thirty in the morning in order to keep out of the way of the poker game. They cross into the bedroom, separated only by portieres from the living room, and meet Mitch as he leaves the bathroom. Blanche looks after him with some interest as he returns to the game. She begins undressing in a shaft of light through the portieres that she knows will expose her to the men in the next room. She dons a robe in time for Mitch's next trip to the bathroom. Out of the game, he stops to talk to Blanche. During their conversation she adopts an air of primness and innocence. Not wanting Mitch to see how old she really is, she asks him to cover the naked light bulb with a little Chinese lantern she had bought in the French Quarter. They dance briefly to some music from the radio, but when the radio distracts the poker players, Stanley becomes violent and throws the radio out of the window, at the same setting off displays of temperament that involve everyone on stage. Blanche and Stella flee to the upstairs apartment, leaving the men to deal with an outraged Stanley. When Stanley discovers that he is alone, he bellows up the stairway like a lost animal until Stella comes down to him.

The next morning Blanche persists in regarding as desperate a situation that Stella has long since accepted as pleasantly normal. Blanche remembers an old admirer, Shep Huntleigh, who she thinks will rescue them. When Stella defends Stanley, Blanche retaliates with a long speech describing Stanley as a Stone Age man. The noise of Stanley's entry covered by the sound of a train, he hears the entire speech. To keep them from realizing that he has overheard, he leaves and enters again. Stella runs into his arms.

When Scene Five begins, the time is well into a humid Louisiana summer. Blanche and Mitch have been dating and she is hoping for a proposal of marriage.

Stanley, who has been making investigations into Blanche's conduct in Laurel, Mississippi, torments Blanche with hints of what he has found out. At the end of this scene, Blanche is left alone on stage. A young man comes to the door to collect for the newspaper. Blanche makes tentative advances to him. Before he leaves, she kisses him very gently on the lips. This scene makes an ambiguous impression in performance, adding one more hint of Blanche's depravity, but combining in this young man a seventeen-year-old boy she had corrupted while teaching in a high school and the young man who was her husband.

In the following scene, later in the evening, Blanche and Mitch return from a date. He stays on for a talk in which Blanche tells him she is hardly able to put up with Stanley's boorishness any longer. Mitch almost stops the conversation by asking Blanche how old she is. His mother wants to know. Blanche diverts his attention from her age by telling him about her husband. She and the boy had married when they were very young. One evening she discovered her husband in a homosexual act with an older man. Later, while they danced to the Varsouviana at a casino outside town, she confronted him with her knowledge. Rushing outside, the young man shot himself. In some way, the mood of this speech prompts the long-awaited proposal from Mitch. Blanche is incoherent with gratitude and relief.

The last section of the play begins in autumn, on Blanche's birthday. Like D. H. Lawrence, Williams is fond of giving zodiacal signs for his characters. Stanley is Capricorn, Blanche Virgo—the goat and the virgin. Stella has prepared a birthday dinner for Blanche. Stanley spoils it as effectively as he can. First he tells Stella that Blanche was a prostitute at a disreputable hotel in Laurel, a hotel she was asked to leave. She lost her high school job because of an affair with a seventeen-year-old student. At first Stella refuses to believe Stanley. Then she de-

fends Blanche's behavior as a reaction to a tragic marriage. Stanley has given the same information to Mitch, who does not appear for the birthday dinner. The evening is a shambles. Stanley climaxes the scene by smashing the dinner dishes on the floor and giving Blanche his birthday present, a bus ticket back to Laurel. At this point Stella reveals that she is in labor, and Stanley takes her to the hospital.

Much later that same evening Mitch comes to the Kowalski apartment in an ugly mood. He repeats to Blanche the lurid details of her past that he has learned from Stanley. Angrily she admits them and volunteers worse. A symbolic counterpoint to this scene is provided by an old Mexican woman selling her flowers for the dead in the street outside the house. Mitch no longer wants to marry Blanche, but he begins a clumsy sexual assault on her that she repels by screaming, illogically, that the building is on fire.

With the help of Stanley's liquor Blanche retreats into the safety of madness. When Stanley returns from the hospital she has decked herself fantastically in scraps of old finery from her trunk. Their long conflict reaches a bizarre resolution. He decides to rape her. Their struggle is underlined by jazz music from a neighboring bar and by a fight between a drunk and a prostitute in the street outside.

In the final scene Blanche is taken away to an asylum. Stella cannot accept her sister's story that Stanley has raped her. To do so would mean the end of her

marriage. (In the Hollywood movie Stella trundled the baby carriage off down the street in self-righteous indignation.) To persuade Blanche to leave quietly, Stella has told her that Shep Huntleigh has come for her. Another poker game is in progress. When Blanche sees the attendants she is at first frightened, but quickly responds to their kindness. Her long exit is invested with real tragic import. Mitch rages at Stanley and has to be pulled off him by the other men. Stanley comforts Stella's weeping, and the neighborhood returns to normal, its values undisturbed.

A major difficulty with the play is the problem of identification with Blanche or Stanley. Blanche is psychotic and outside the range of our identification, however we may pity her. If we are to be psychologically sophisticated and accept her nymphomania, alcoholism, and exhibitionism as something any of us would do, then we must question the play's assertion that these things were induced by early widowhood, however shocking the circumstances. If Stanley represents the natural man, his code for judging Blanche seems middle class and harsh rather than primitive. He is most appealing in his sensual exchanges with Stella, but his cruelty antagonizes us elsewhere in the play.

Whatever the confusion in point, the work exhibits characters of unusual vividness. The dialogue is natural and frequently eloquent. The events compel our interest and sympathy, and in the theater are often electrifying.

STUDIES IN CLASSIC AMERICAN LITERATURE

Type of work: Literary essays

Author: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

First published: 1923

D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, at first glance a puzzling book, survives nonetheless for its powerful insights into our literature. It is

puzzling because of its style, so informal, so impulsive, and so seemingly self-contradictory. It is full of exclamations, words all in capital letters, choppy sen-

tences. But it is impressive in the great task it undertakes, and it will leave the reader shaken with new ideas about our literature, upset enough to force him to a reconsideration and re-evaluation not only of American classics, but also of the quality of the American experience. Lawrence believed that criticism, like literature in general should be written with passion and with moral purpose.

In these essays the reader will find controlling ideas familiar in other books by Lawrence. Lawrence applies to American literature his apparatus of the deeper soul and the blood-impulses, and to it also he brings his sensitive response to nature and his appreciation of honesty and delicacy in the description of nature. One can see the preoccupations of Lawrence's thought in his key words: democracy, love, sex, death, and savagery. Thus, bringing to our classics his own convictions, Lawrence sees American literature in a fresh way, as an outsider looking with a special perspective.

In this extended essay the works of eight American authors are studied: three novelists (Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville), three prose writers (Franklin, Crève-cœur, and Dana), and two poets (Poe and Whitman), all but two belonging to the first seven decades of the nineteenth century. The selection follows what has become since Lawrence the standard authors or classics of the beginnings and the renaissance of American literature, except for the surprising inclusion of Dana and the omission of Jefferson, Irving, and the Transcendentalists. The selection was probably dictated by the origin of the articles which after periodical publication came to make up the book. About 1915-1916 Lawrence, contemplating emigration to the United States, reread some of the American books of his youth and wrote out his findings in some salable articles. Also, being Lawrence, he used his reading of the texts to propound his ideas, this accounting for the important opening chapter "The Spirit of Place" which more or less directs the argument,

and probably for the omission of Emerson, who must have been anathema to him.

The book could be alternatively subtitled "D. H. Lawrence on the American." He uses what evidence attracts him in the literature to answer the question propounded by Crève-cœur—"What is an American?"—and the literature is a substitute for actual experience of the country itself. This attempt to discover the psyche of the race which produced the works has not until recently recommended Lawrence's study to students of American literature; in scholarship one can make little of the dazzling aperçus, however stimulating they may be. But the book was written by a common reader for his like, and the more we contemplate it the more remarkable it seems. Its style is deliberately fragmented to preserve Lawrence's hortatory tone; it is his only book of literary criticism; it is the only writing on American literature by a great English writer; and the essay on "The Spirit of Place" is significant in the study of Lawrence, the most world-wide geographer in English fiction.

The different extant versions of this opening essay are described in Armin Arnold's *D. H. Lawrence and America*. The general argument of the essay, developed in the book, is typically an exhortation to Americans to become Americans by responding to the spirit of the place, America; this spirit was represented variously in "classic American literature" but has since become obscured; one way of regaining such a response is to reread the American classics as Lawrence would have us read them, without any first-hand experience of America or Americans, as impressionistic criticism valuable to Lawrence in coping with his love-hate relationship to the Old World. The argument uses Lawrence's common notion that Christianity imposed on the simple blood-knowledge of primitive peoples a mild-body antagonism, a crux represented by the Cross; Lawrence's own metaphor for response between individu-

als or between people and place is electromagnetic, that of two poles which build up forces which must be discharged in an explosion of emotion. This aspect of Lawrence's criticism is most graphically portrayed when he mocks Dana's sickness at watching a flogging; Lawrence says both the flogger and the flogged feel a lot better after the tension built up between them is released.

Similar perverse judgments crowd the pages—Hawthorne, for example, is described as a "darling" with blue eyes—and stem from the Lawrencian code he was trying to discover in these writers. When they offended the code Lawrence was contemptuous of their writing: one of the (unintentionally) comic passages is Lawrence's scream of fury at Franklin's rule of conduct in sex: "Rarely use venery but for health and offspring." At the same time Lawrence was using his own novels to try to awaken the English to the life of the blood exemplified in his Brangwyns. In this book he turns to exhorting the Americans through the only contact he had with that continent, its early literature. He was trying to rescue Americans from their present fallen state, which he knew only in a European stereotype, to their original Adamic condition or true nature by showing the unconscious, or blood knowledge of that nature, in classic American literature. The difficulty however, was that the writers he discussed did not know they exhibited this consciousness and most of them thought they were doing something else in writing.

Lawrence said in letters that this work was a kind of psychoanalysis of literature, and he spent much time polishing the essays—but not rereading his texts—before publication in *The English Review* in 1918-1919 and before their appearance as a book. But just as there is a little clarification of the principal term "American" (meaning Americans as they are and as they were or ought to be), so there is still difficulty with the critical terms "knowledge" and "consciousness"; the distinction between the two meanings Lawrence

employs is usually represented as the difference between thinking and feeling. It may be said, then, that Lawrence "feels" his way into the works of his authors; such an approach is capable of unique illuminations since each reader is a unique individual, but it shows the grossest fault in the book. Lawrence romantically prefers passionate relationships to any other, and so Hester is the villain of *The Scarlet Letter* while Chillingworth's vengeance is minimized. This perverse reading of Hawthorne's intentions is, of course, possible because of the nature of the book, and Lawrence does offer a reading of Pearl that could stimulate discussion of the book through her role in it.

The hero of his whole study is Natty Bumppo (whom Europeans usually prefer to Huckleberry Finn) because Bumppo acknowledges the "spirit of place" and allows it to guide his actions. One suspects that there are further reasons. Bumppo remained a bachelor and a virgin; Hester Prynne's villainy consists in wearing that scarlet letter and thus denying, to Lawrence at least, her "blood-consciousness" of her paramour, Dimmesdale. Lawrence's preference for the lack of women in Melville, Dana, and Cooper, and his particular approach to Walt Whitman make him appear to suffer the "Boy Scout" complex Leslie A. Fiedler analyzes in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, a work which bears a certain superficial resemblance to Lawrence's essay.

The villain of the book is Franklin, whom Lawrence reluctantly admires and actively dislikes as the originator of the latter-day American delight in gimmickry and the denial of the Adamic past. The dashing style, partial analyses, willful judgments, and Lawrence's own method of dialectic—he often develops his argument poetically by catching up a term in one paragraph and teasing out its meaning in the next—make it difficult to come to specific conclusions about each essay. For these reasons the most provocative is that on *The Scarlet Letter* and the

most sympathetic those on *Moby Dick* and Walt Whitman; the slightest is probably that on Poe.

The most interesting essay is that on *Two Years Before The Mast*, by Richard Henry Dana, Jr. This study introduces the works by Melville on the sea, as against those on the land by Crèvecoeur, Cooper, and Hawthorne (concluding with his study of *The Blithedale Romance*), and the change of subject enabled him to sum up the relation of Americans to their soil. Furthermore, apart from the appreciative extracts from *Moby Dick*, the essay on Dana's book sticks more to the work and illustrates the argument freely. The essay also allows Lawrence to develop ideas about brute labor, passionate relationships, and cosmic elements, all of which fired his philosophic imagination. He discovers in Dana what he approved of in Hawthorne and Melville, the fact that they really knew what they were talking about: man's discovery of the limitations of body and soul, and his determination to endure in the face of that knowledge when it had been beaten into his blood.

This discussion prepares the ground for the final essay on Whitman and its

noble conclusion on the soul, which by this time Lawrence has come to accept as an equivalent to "blood-consciousness": the soul is freed in Whitman's primary symbol of the open road to achieve a "democracy" of naked relationships which Lawrence promptly converts into "the love of man and woman" and "the love of comrades," thus triumphantly discovering in the last of his studies the overt expression of what he had insisted all along lay hidden in "classic American literature." Had Lawrence managed to equate "the open road" not only with "democracy" and "love" but also with the "spirit of place" he would have brought his argument full circle. But in so doing he would have denied the starting point of his studies: that he knew better than American writers or Americans themselves what the original and true meaning of the term "American" really was. Because such a conclusion is likely to fall easily into a romantic and European stereotype of America as the currently available version of the lost European Eden (Africa has served a similar duty), Lawrence would only have shown more obviously the limitations of the "spirit" of his own place.

STUDIES ON HYSTERIA

Type of work: Psychological study

Authors: Josef Breuer (1842-1925) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

First published: 1893-1895

Studies on Hysteria is the fascinating account of the invention of the first scientific method for analyzing the human mind. Leaving aside the question of what share of the book should be attributed to each author, we can follow the first steps in the invention of free-association psychoanalysis as the method was developed and as its originators overcame the obstacles that questioned its validity. The five case histories illustrate these obstacles and the manner in which Breuer and Freud developed the tools of psychoanalysis as a way to treat hysteria.

The first part of *Studies on Hysteria* is the essay "on the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication," which first appeared in 1893. This is a consideration of the nature of hysteria. The authors say that they have sought the cause of the illness and have found that it lies in the subject's past even though the subject is unable to recollect it unless he is under hypnosis. Each symptom of the illness, however varied, is related to that event in the subject's life and forms a clearly evident connection to it. Any experience

which calls up distressing effects may be the type of psychical trauma that is a cause of later hysteria. The particular type that interests Breuer and Freud is the one that the subject represses; because he has forced it into his unconscious, it persists and, unlike conscious recollections, is a cause of hysteria. The psychologists were greatly surprised when they discovered that the hysterical symptoms immediately and permanently disappeared the moment that the original event and its accompanying affect were recognized by the subject. These psychical events, in other words, no longer cause hysteria when the patient has discharged the affects.

Because such events are completely absent from the subject's mind when he is in a normal psychical state, the analysts used hypnosis; under the effects of hypnosis the subject can remember things that he has repressed, thereby making reaction possible. Hypnosis can do so because it splits the subject's consciousness, the basic phenomenon of neurosis. It allows the subject to articulate the strangulated effect and, by introducing it into his consciousness, to remove it by the physician's suggestion.

The second part of *Studies on Hysteria* is the five case histories in which the remarks of the first part are illustrated. The first case history (Breuer's patient, Fräulein Anna O.) demonstrated the amnesia characteristic of hysteria and the realization that behind the conscious mind there lay an unconscious mind. The way to get into this unconscious mind was hypnotic suggestion: the analyst got the patient to begin talking and then listened to the patient's ramblings without interrupting. But the case history of Frau Emmy von N. (Freud's patient) shows the obstacles in this approach: (1) Freud was not adept at hypnotism, and (2) the patient often resisted treatment. Herein lay the seeds for Freud's entire career. The third case history, Miss Lucy R., was analyzed in a normal state of consciousness because Freud was unable to

hypnotize her; this important case was the beginning of psychoanalysis as Freud was to develop it during the remainder of his career. The fourth case history, Katharina, is little more than a conversation, but through it Freud discovered that in the case of hysteria based on sexual traumas pre-sexual impressions were of utmost importance. The fifth case history, Fräulein Elisabeth von R., concerns what we would now call a psychosomatic condition, paralysis caused by psychical trauma. This was a case of symbolism: the patient had symbolically expressed her painful thoughts in her legs.

The third part of *Studies on Hysteria*, written by Breuer, is a further discussion of the ideas introduced in Part I. Breuer divided this essay into six sections, each of which carries his considerations deeper than the previous one. The first section—"Are All Hysterical Phenomena Ideogenic?"—deals with the origin and determination of hysteria. Breuer and Freud differ from the then current thought that all pathological phenomena are caused by ideas because they feel that some of the phenomena of hysteria are caused by physical mechanism and some are not. In fact, ordinary ideas are not strong enough to cause hysteria; the only idea that can cause a hysteria is one which is accompanied by a special abnormal condition. In this case the hysteria is determined by the abnormal excitability of the nervous system, not by the idea itself. In general, a great number of hysterical phenomena may be ideogenic but all are caused by an abnormal excitability of the nervous system. This conclusion leads to the second question: how do these abnormal excitations arise?

The states of waking and of sleeping are two extreme conditions of the central nervous system. Separating these extremes is the amount of energy being consumed, the waking state consuming more energy to do its work than the sleeping one. The brain uses a limited amount of energy, but it varies in its application of this energy. For example, if

we are exercising, we cannot engage in continuous thought. Thus in the waking brain the "intracerebral tonic excitation" is varied. In the mind, however, there is a tendency to keep the intracerebral excitation constant (Freud's "principle of constancy"); therefore, we tend to convert an overstimulation into something else. If we are overstimulated, for example, we may convert this excitation into aimless pacing up and down. If, however, there is no discharge of excitation, the mind is powerfully stimulated but has no immediate release as in the cases of anger, fright, or anxiety. There are two ways by which the brain can return to its ordinary level of excitation: gradually leveling off (normal process) or hysterical conversion.

Breuer extensively analyzes hysterical conversion in the third section of this essay. An abnormal affective reaction is not hysteria if it has an immediate objective basis. If the idea releases its affect as it emerges, then the mind has undergone a normal reaction; but if the affect is transformed into another channel, the affective idea now produces an abnormal reflex. Such a discharge is determined through symbolism; associations are made along fresh lines that have a symbolic relation to the pathogenic idea. Because the idea has been disguised, the subject no longer feels threatened by it and can be happy. In other words, the origin of hysteria is an idea that the subject represses into his unconscious. Through hypnosis and the hypnoid states, Breuer was led to the conclusions that unconscious ideas exist and that they are operative. Conscious ideas he defines as ideas that the subject is aware of; all other ideas are unconscious.

Only the clearest ideas remain conscious; the greater number of ideas remain unconscious. The pathogenic idea is one which the conscious mind is unable to admit without strenuous help from a physician. This idea is pushed into the unconscious, where it disturbs the intracerebral excitation constancy and

through symbolism causes hysteria. Thus while the patient has not split his consciousness, he has *split his mind*, the degree of the split determining the seriousness of the hysteria. The unconscious idea can affect the conscious mind, but the conscious mind has no control over the unconscious idea. But all hysterical phenomena form an almost unbroken chain passing from the symptom to the pathogenic idea. Thus the physician can follow the chain to its source.

In the last section of his essay Breuer asks why one person represses an idea and gets a particular kind of hysteria while another person, who has the same idea, has no pathological reaction. His answer is that any explanation that generalizes is wrong, the capacity for hysteria being a part of the subject's innate disposition. When he wrote, the field of psychological investigation had already advanced far enough for Breuer to recognize sexuality as one of the major causes of hysteria, but the great work in this area was still to be done by Freud.

The final essay in *Studies on Hysteria* is Freud's "The Psychotherapy of Hysteria." Breuer discussed the theoretical nature of hysteria; Freud discusses the method or instrument that he and Breuer had invented for treating hysteria. Breuer's method (as described in the case history of Fräulein Anna O.) was to hypnotize his patients and then allow them to follow the chain of associations back to the pathogenic idea. Freud, however, found that not everyone could be hypnotized. This discovery led him to distinguish between hysteria and neuroses, and he found that Breuer's method worked perfectly well with the cases of neurosis that had no symptoms of hysteria. This finding led him to the conclusion that hysteria was not unique, a significant discovery in the early history of psychology.

Because hypnosis would not work for all patients, even though they had symptoms of hysteria, Freud sought to by-pass it and still obtain the pathogenic idea by

means of a continuous chain of symbolism. Freud found that by using association, the patient could remain conscious but still follow certain key themes back toward their cause. Still, however, there was the barrier, the resistance of the conscious mind to the undesired idea or to the undesired complex of ideas. Freud found that it did no good for him to tell the patient what the cause of his hysteria was; the patient had to recognize it himself. Thus when the patient had followed his free association to the point where he reached the barrier, Freud applied the pressure to the patient's head, and the pathogenic idea that had ostensibly been forgotten was quite often remembered. (Freud later abandoned this pressure technique, but in 1895 it seemed extremely important to him.) This psycho-

therapeutic method works only if and when the patient faces the idea that had been pushed into his unconscious. If he refuses to recognize it, nothing the physician can do or say will help him. Freud recognized that there was a possibility of the pressure technique failing, but he also saw that he and Breuer had made a significant break-through in the study of the human mind.

While Freud would later repudiate certain parts of this book and greatly enlarge others, *Studies on Hysteria* is a landmark in his career as well as in the early history of psychology. It records the birth of the method of psychoanalysis, the method that Freud would perfect in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and it introduces the studies that were to occupy Freud for the next forty years.

THE SUMMING UP

Type of work: Literary autobiography
Author: W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)
Time: 1890-1938
First published: 1938

Although *The Summing Up* must be classified as autobiography, in only a very few of the seventy-seven sections into which it is divided is the author concerned with the listing of facts and events or the description of personalities important in his life, a procedure one customarily associates with this literary genre. In Sections VI and VII Mr. Maugham writes brief notes on his grandparents, his eccentric barrister grandfather (on his father's side his family has been connected with the law for several generations), and his grandmother on his mother's side, who as the widow of an army officer settled in France, composed music and wrote novels. He gives scarcely more information on his parents, his young and beautiful mother, who died of tuberculosis before he was nine, and his older and "ugly" father whose death two years later left him an orphan to be brought up by his uncle, a clergyman. In Sections XVIII

through XXI he touches on his experiences, both happy and unhappy, as a schoolboy in Canterbury and much later as a student at St. Thomas' Hospital, in London, which provided him with material for his creative work, particularly as a novelist. Elsewhere are passages, often merely a short paragraph or two, seldom more than a few pages, in which Mr. Maugham recounts his adventures as a tourist or temporary resident in a foreign country; for example, as a young man in Spain or as a member of the British Intelligence Service during World War I.

But *The Summing Up* is not conventional autobiography. As Mr. Maugham himself announces in Section III, his book largely represents an attempt to put in order his thoughts on subjects that had interested him during his life. What had chiefly interested Maugham in the course of his life was prose composition, whether expository or narrative, as a means of

communication between writer and reader or, as in the theater, between dramatist and audience.

Probably the best known sections in *The Summing Up* are those concerned with style, for Maugham's comments on "lucidity, simplicity, and euphony" are often excerpted and anthologized in college texts used by teachers and students. In Sections X through XV the author discusses and characterizes the style of a number of writers, not an easy task, with great insight and ingenuity. His evaluations are frequently original, often persuasive. He states that the King James Bible has had a deleterious influence, that Sir Thomas Brown, Dr. Johnson, Gibbon, and Carlyle, despite their moments of grandeur, are not for all time. For Mr. Maugham the great stylists are Dryden, Swift, Hazlitt, Newman, and Arnold, and among Continental writers Voltaire (the greatest of all) and Colette. In his descriptions and comparisons he is particularly successful. Nowhere else does he demonstrate more surely his ability to turn the felicitous phrase, to choose the *mot juste*.

Although as a creative writer Maugham first became known as a novelist with such realistic tales of slum life as *Liza of Lambeth*, published in 1897, he first became famous and financially independent as a dramatist when he had four plays running simultaneously in west end theaters in 1907. He devotes Sections XXX through XLIII to describing his early efforts and varying degrees of success in this genre, tracing his development as a dramatist from his first play *A Man of Honor*, first performed in 1903, through his last *Sheppy*, produced in 1932. He mentions specifically the construction of such plays as *Our Betters*, *Lady Frederick*, and *The Constant Wife*, sets down rules and explains techniques which may be summed up in two simple principles: making a point and sticking to it, and cutting wherever possible. (Because Maugham regarded himself as especially talented in conveying the sound

of the living voice in dialogue it is interesting to note that in the summer of 1965 the unfavorable critical comment on a revival of *The Circle* was largely directed against the stilted dialogue, unnatural even in the period and society with which it is concerned.) In Sections XXX through XLIII he also discusses the nature of comedy, writes of directors and producers, of the great importance of actors, and of the influence and importance of the audience. Among the English playwrights whom he discusses or mentions are Shakespeare, Congreve, Goldsmith, Shaw, and his contemporary, Granville Barker; of the foreign dramatists, he refers most frequently to Molière, Chekov, and Ibsen.

With the exception of *Liza of Lambeth* and *Mrs. Craddock*, Maugham regards the fiction he wrote during the first ten years of his professional career as apprentice exercises. It was not until 1915, after he was well established as a dramatist, that he wrote the novel which remains his best known work. In Section LI he describes succinctly, with a directness that is moving, the genesis of this novel, *Of Human Bondage*, of how it developed out of his obsession with his memories of his past that had become such a burden to him that he felt he could only achieve peace by writing it all down in the form of a novel. He reports that the publication of this book, a mingling of fact and fiction, freed him forever from the burden of a painful past.

After the conclusion of World War I, in which he served in the Intelligence Department, Maugham made a series of journeys to the Far East and the South Pacific. In Sections LV and LX he explains the importance of these journeys, stating that the encounters and experiences in strange lands and distant seas provided him with fresh inspirations and material for such novels as *The Painted Veil* and *The Narrow Corner*; for such short stories as *Rain*, *The Outstation*, and dozens of others. After a brief discussion of the short story in which he contrasts

the practice of Chekov, who had no talent for writing a story of dramatic compactness, with his own view of the short story as a narrative of a single even from which everything not contributing to dramatic unity has been eliminated. Maugham concludes the most important part of his autobiography, the first sixty-two sections, by disparaging the usefulness of current criticism and lamenting that there is no critic in his own time of the stature of Sainte-Beuve or Matthew Arnold, who despite their faults possessed a profound knowledge of and interest in literature beneficial to writers.

What follows in the final Sections LXIII through LXVII is in the nature of an extended postscript or epilogue in which Maugham meditates on matters of universal concern, the nature of God, the existence of evil, death, the possibilities of immortality, and meaning of life, matters generally regarded as metaphysical by the professional philosopher. The connection between the subject matter of this meditation and that of the main body of this work may seem tenuous, but the tone and method of discourse, the attitude, the frame of reference provide unifying links.

Sounding a more personal note than customary, Maugham describes the experiences, intellectual and emotional, which led to his rejection of the tenets of a conventional Anglican faith for an agnosticism which deprived life of all meaning. He then considers the values by which one must live who cannot believe: Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. He refuses to regard either Truth or Beauty as the greatest values because neither engenders the altruistic view nor produces "right action." The supreme value is Goodness, whose value alone seems an end in itself.

In these last sections Mr. Maugham dwells on the pattern he has made of his own life. He never makes entirely clear the character of this pattern with begin-

ning, middle, and end, but states that it is not the best, not that of husbandry, marriage, and children. Actually it represents a way of life determined by his nature and circumstances.

This last portion of his autobiography is prolix. The moralizing becomes tedious. Most readers will find it the least satisfactory of Maugham's meditation.

The best way to read *The Summing Up* is in small doses, a few sections at a time as though the book were a collection of short familiar essays unified through concern with various aspects of essentially the same subject matter. For a style which is remarkably urbane and mellifluous can become under the accumulative effect of the perfect phrasing, the casual and yet so carefully structured sentence and paragraph, monotonous and self-conscious. In his effort to write in that easy conversational manner recommended long ago by Hazlitt, the sound of the living voice which Maugham achieves so successfully carries with it on occasion suggestions of egotism and smugness, qualities irritating to sensitive and sophisticated readers. However, for those who are interested in the generalizations and specific comments of a successful novelist, short story writer, and dramatist on his craft, in the pronouncements of an informed critic on the work of a large number of writers of different periods and nationalities, and in the observations of a highly cultivated man on some matters of universal importance which he has chosen to scrutinize and ponder, *The Summing Up* will always be instructive, attractive reading. Many creative writers in discussing their own work, in evaluating the work of others, in explaining method, in expressing private convictions on issues of general interest may well reveal greater range of understanding and depth of feeling, but few can communicate their thoughts with such grace and clarity.

A TALE OF A TUB

Type of work: Satire and parody

Author: Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

First published: 1704

Principal characters:

PETER, representing the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church

MARTIN, representing Martin Luther, hence the Lutheran and Anglican churches

JACK, representing John Calvin, hence the Calvinist Dissenters

A Tale of a Tub has been called the greatest of English satires. The point is debatable, but the work is surely a most spirited, complex, and amusing contribution to this genre. Swift was also to show his satirical genius in *Gulliver's Travels* and in his famous essay advocating the eating of infants, "A Modest Proposal," to mention but two.

Not yet Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Swift wrote *A Tale of a Tub* presumably between 1696 and 1698 under circumstances interesting to scholars of the period. Satire by its very nature is written when a man wishes to attack something. Swift spent a lifetime attacking the pretensions and stupidity of the world around him. His main object in *A Tale of a Tub*, he said, was to ridicule "the numerous and gross corruptions in religion and learning." These, we discover, include pedantic scholars, egoistic critics, fanatic literalists in religion, and clever theologians. Such men poison society with misapplication of their reasoning powers.

Merely an unrestrained attack makes for tedious reading. Wisely Swift saw to it that his sense of outrage is complemented throughout by a sense of the comic. For example, the opening dedication to Lord Somers shows Swift in one of his frequent contrived comic poses. Here, engagingly posing as a gullible and naïve bookseller, he satirizes the excessive praise so prevalent in dedications of the time. The genius of the attempt is the fact that hyperbole itself is the method he employs.

With the second of the prefatory dedi-

cations Swift's battle stance becomes clearer. Addressing "His Royal Highness Prince Posterity," Swift makes a great and ironic show of ascribing to his age great wit and literary achievement. The point of the irony here will be picked up instantly by the reader who recalls Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*. There Swift satirized the scientists who pursued novelty and modernity for their own sakes, sneering at achievements of the past. Here in the *Tale* Swift implies that the wise man is he who seeks out virtue and value in all ages. Modernity alone has no just claim; what is new is not necessarily the best. Swift's position, then, in the "Battle of the Books" (an intellectual controversy of his time), tended to favor the Ancients or the classics as opposed to the Moderns.

In the subsequent preface Swift continues with his consummate irony to excoriate the writers of his time. Here he explains his title. When seamen meet a whale, they throw out an empty tub to divert him lest he wreck the ship. If the ship is the ship of state and the whale represents the vast body of scurrilous and destructive writers and thinkers who "pick holes in the weak sides of religion and government," then this *Tale*, says Swift, shall serve as a similar decoy for the wits of the day to attack.

On the surface Swift's intention and meaning seem plain. Here is the perennial cry against two swarms of pests: the egoistic poetasters who set themselves up as wits, intellectuals, and critics, and the newer philosophers whose theories seem harmful to England's Christian and constitutional way of life, as in the case of

Thomas Hobbes. As a conservative, a good Anglican, and a defender of the Ancients, Swift was understandably angered. But latent in the argument, as is often the case with sensible Swift, is his recognition that in fact there are flaws in man's existing schemes of religion and government: "a great many are hollow, and dry, and empty, and noisy, and wooden." The point here is simply that Swift's satire is distinguished not only by its sharp edge but by its double edge.

Swift proceeds through his preface by calling into play parody, well-turned phrase, artful digression, and mock diffidence—all these in preparation for the style and method of the treatise itself and all playing harmoniously in one of the world's great symphonies of irony.

Now follow eleven sections of the *Tale* proper and the conclusion. Part I is the Introduction. With Section II the tale officially begins, as all such tales must: "Once upon a time. . . ." The tale resumes in Sections IV, VI, VIII, and XI, with the intervening sections consisting of "digressions." The tale proper contains Swift's satire on abuses in religion; the digressions satirize abuses in learning.

The Introduction serves further to establish Swift's pose as a pedantic and prolific scholar. Ironically he is satirizing pedantry as he laboriously extracts allegories out of simple tales.

Swift's own tale then begins, the reader having been forewarned to observe its own patterns of allegory. The characters involved are three brothers, triplets: Peter, Martin, and Jack. They represent St. Peter (the Roman Catholic Church), Martin Luther (the Church of England, founded as a consequence of the Reformation), and John Calvin (the Dissenters). On his deathbed their father bequeathed each a simple and durable coat to be worn carefully and never altered. The coat of course represents the New Testament doctrines of the early Christian Church. When the three brothers decide to become men about town, they need to remodel their coats with shoulder knots, gold lace, silver fringes, and embroidery

to be in fashion. Swift focuses his satire on the sophistry and abuses of logic by which clever Peter finds in the father's will a license for these alterations.

Having thus caustically attended to Roman Catholic accretions, Swift now turns to the field of learning in his first digression. This is a biting attack on modern critics, who seek out only the worst in an author and catalogue his defects. Swift ironically commends these creatures of prey, pretending to find glorious historical antecedents for their kind.

Returning now, in Section IV, to the tale, Swift excoriates various institutions of the Roman Catholic Church: purgatory, penance, private confession, holy water, papal bulls, celibacy, relics, and the like. Each he describes with great dignity and seriousness, as Swift here takes an opportunity to blend his satire on religious excesses with his satire on pedantry. The focus of the *Tale* is thus still on Peter, who by now styles himself Lord Peter and claims precedence over his brothers. Brothers Martin and Jack finally rebel and obtain a copy of their father's will, which made them all equal heirs. Angry Peter forces them from the house where all have been living together. Thus the allegory recounts the Reformation.

At this climactic point nothing could be more inappropriate than a digression; and so with deliberate intent the comic Swift presents a digression. With irony he satirizes the habit of modern writers to expatiate on their own virtues and discoveries while they ridicule the Ancients.

Swift now records the further adventures of Martin and Jack. Martin removes carefully the fopperies from his coat and manages to get it somewhat back to its original state. Jack, however, with too great zeal, rips off the decorations with such haste that his coat is torn to rags. He now envies Martin, and so these two fall out. Thus is allegorized the split between Luther and the less temperate Calvinist reformers. Martin (or the Established Church in England) represents Swift's ideal or norm, a middle course between

Peter's ingenuity and Jack's fanaticism.

Swift now offers another ironic digression "in praise of digressions." The butt of the satire here is the modern writer and his habit of neglecting method, style, good grammar, and originality. Instead, he compiles his mindless writings chiefly by plagiarizing and digression.

Returning to the tale proper, Swift invents a fantastic sect of "Aeolists" as he continues his satire of Jack and his followers. They were wind-worshippers who venerated man as a wind-producing machine with outlets at both ends. Swift's rather labored satire here is addressed against the bombast and energy of Calvinist preachers.

Section IX is the famous digression on madness, full of dextrous shifts in irony which have endlessly fascinated readers. Swift is continuing his Aeolist fantasies by suggesting that madness occurs when malign vapors rise from the lower regions of the body to poison the brain. Results both good and bad derive from this distemper: wars, new philosophies, and all striking achievements of man. What happens is that man's fancy gets in control of his reason and imagination overwhelms common sense.

But does Swift recommend that man forsake imagination, that the mind be content with things as they are, with comprehending the mere surfaces of things? Here is the point at which Swift's ranging irony may seem to demolish every alternative. If minute and imaginative scholarship turns into pedantry, this is evil. But to be content with superficial knowledge is evil as well. Swift slices through the perplexity by cautioning against the most serious error, self-deception. Let a man conduct his life

sensibly, understanding the full nature and implications of his acts. Be neither superficial nor pedantic but intelligent.

Section X blends heavy irony and light-hearted comedy as Swift attacks the hypocrisy and self-regard of modern writers and slyly toys with the reader. With a jab at perverse scholars such as numerologists and cabalists, he returns to his tale proper.

Here he lampoons fanatic, scripture-quoting Calvinists: their doctrine of predestination, their aversion to music in churches, their insistence on simplicity, and their apparent courting of persecution. In short, Jack's increasing whims and affectations make him appear more and more like Peter, much to the dismay of both.

A rambling conclusion ends the book, Swift having successfully defended good sense in religion and learning through the process of ridiculing aberrations. If there is one chief victim of his mockery it is one William Wotton, a scholar whose angry comments Swift gleefully added as footnotes to subsequent editions.

Occasional use of scatology and satirical excesses flaw the work in the eyes of some critics, especially Swift's contemporaries: Swift responded in the fifth edition by making certain alterations, omitting, for example, a short synoptic piece of the tale and a digression on war, both of which had followed Section IX. A lengthy and angry "Apology" (or defense) also accompanied this edition. But over the years critics have frequently viewed the *A Tale of a Tub* as Swift's masterpiece in this field, a highly moral work offering an indirect recipe for the conduct of a Christian humanist.

TARKA THE OTTER

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry Williamson (1895-)

Time: Early decades of this century

Locale: The Two Rivers, Devon, England

First published: 1927

Principal characters:

TARKA, a male otter
WHITETIP, his second mate
TARQUOL, their male cub
GREYMUZZLE, Tarka's first mate
DEADLOCK, the leader of the otter hounds
OLD NOG, the heron
BUBU, the Arctic owl
STICKERSEE, the weasel
FANG-OVER-LIP, the fox

Since Western man took to city living in large numbers and began only to holiday in his original locale, the countryside, we have had to rely on a few men in every generation momentarily to recapture for us what we have given up for good. These devoted naturalists pass on their accumulated knowledge in books which exhibit two common and marked features: first, writing close to nature seems to clarify literary style so that animals are the subjects of some of the best English prose; second, although conservationists at heart, these writers report fearlessly the natural struggle for existence, thereby reminding us even more poignantly of a vanished jungle where might was right, all issues were simple, and cunning, or luck, provided the only means of staying alive. Perhaps that is the charm and the moral of the nature fabulist.

The final impression of *Tarka the Otter* is of ferocity that seems incredible at first because the action takes place in what Williamson calls the Two Rivers, a quiet area of Devon that includes moors and railway bridges, fishing boats on the estuaries and sheds for the ducks on the farm. The otter, it appears, has nothing to fear except man. His build and agility enables him to feed well on fish of all kinds, on birds, even on frogs and rabbits. Man protects him when young in order to hunt him with packs of otter hounds for the sake of sport and of conservation; after all, he is a vicious and often senseless killer of salmon and other game. Williamson's picture of man is therefore of a killer; his sympathies are with the otter, sympathies developed no doubt from the

otter cub he tamed and then lost when it became caught in a trap and would trust him no longer. There are, however, a number of nature lovers who briefly appear in the book: the man who plays music to the seals, the girl who does not give Tarka away when she spots him in the last fatal hunt. Included in this group is the author who makes an odd brief personal appearance at the end of the first half of the book.

Tarka the Otter is Williamson's first book; he followed it with other nature studies, such as *Salar the Salmon*, and later with human stories. In this work there is a certain strain, admitted by the author later, in the pell-mell recital of events, most of which follow inconsequentially, leaving an impression of many disconnected actions. This effect is explained by the protagonist. Because Tarka has little memory, the author must point out the fact to us when Tarka returns over old paths or to old "holts" or dens. The furious activity is also caused by the life described, where a split-second separates life and death during the nights when most of the action occurs. There is a very tight relationship of cause and effect, for one slip can be fatal. Each action precipitates a sequence affecting many others, as when Tarka chases a rabbit which in its headlong flight runs into a stoat. Tarka nips the stoat on the shoulder and makes him retreat. Other stoats then surround Tarka as he eats the rabbit. He escapes the pack and a badger finishes the rabbit. All creatures who hunt at night live under the prime condition of kill or be killed.

The book has a tremendous sense of

life, produced in part by giving the beasts appropriate names and human characteristics. Greymuzzle, an old otter bitch, gives her life for Tarka when he is trapped: an old otter dog dies when it is frozen into the ice; a cub perishes in the terrible winter weather. There are comic characters like Old Nog, the heron, awesome killers like Bubu, the Arctic owl, and despicable beasts like the stoats who hunt in packs. Their cries are rendered faithfully, and these together with their names and actions give the story life and character. The reader follows Old Nog and Deadlock, the massive otter hound, from first to last in the book and from time to time meet up with Stickersee, the weasel, or Fang-over-lip, the fox. But chiefly the story deals with the adventures of Tarka through his two years of life summarized in the subtitle: "His joyful water-life and death in the Two Rivers." Tarka is born, grows to maturity in six months, mates twice, and is hunted several times; he lives through one terrible winter and dies at the approach of the next.

The novel is divided into two parts entitled "The First Year" and "The Last Year." After Tarka's birth he is cared for by his mother, especially when the hounds come nosing around, but at last he learns to take care of himself. The principal lesson he learns is loneliness, for otters, except when mating or in cub, seem to hunt alone. The first year ends with his mating with Greymuzzle and their trip down to a seacave. Their adventures include a fight with the monster conger eel.

In the second part Tarka is alone again; he travels up the Two Rivers to the moors. There he hunts until he meets Whitetip, a bitch he last saw as a cub. Once he leaves the moors for the lower reaches

of the river, he and Whitetip are often hunted by hounds; he narrowly escapes three times. But in the last hunt Tarquol, his son by Whitetip, is killed. In the end Tarka himself is hemmed in a pool by stickles, or rows of tipped stakes. When he finally tires, he returns as all dying otters do to the land from which he came and is caught by Deadlock, the leader of a pack of otter hounds. Together they disappear in a flurry of foam. Deadlock's body rises to the surface, but only a stream of bubbles marks the place where Tarka went down.

Although the book is about Tarka all the time, as his adventures proceed one has the feeling that he may be simply vehicle for an ecological study of the region of the Two Rivers. The author knows the geography there better than the reader who sees it only at otter-height. There is a profusion of place names which tends to be confusing; a similar loss of direction comes from following Tarka to meal after meal. Eventually one wonders what Tarka's adventures would add up to if Deadlock had not killed him. What is the purpose of the otter? He seems to be simply a killer of domestic animals, game, and rodents; therefore he must be an important part of the balance of nature. In judging the book, one settles for the nature study. There is, after all, a tremendous sense of reality evoked as Tarka moves by night across the fields and down the rivers, under a charabanc, past a startled fisherman. All the various details of the book add to this realism: the use of dialect terms for animals, the names for the various beasts, the remarkable sense of smell. All add up to a sense of ferocious life, of living in every sinew and whisker. That is the nature fabulist's intention and achievement.

THE TENANTS OF MOONBLOOM

Type of work: Novel

Author: Edward Lewis Wallant (1926-1962)

Time: The present

Locale: New York City
First published: 1963

Principal characters:

NORMAN MOONBLOOM, a real estate agent for four apartment houses
IRWIN MOONBLOOM, his brother, the owner of the buildings
GAYLORD KNIGHT, the janitor
BODIEN, an unlicensed plumber
EVA, MINNA, and LESTER BAILEY, two doting aunts and a nephew
ARNOLD and BETTY JACOBY, an aged couple
MARVIN SCHOENBRUN, a fastidious homosexual
STANLEY KATZ and SIDONE, bohemian jazz musicians
SHERMAN and CAROL HAUSER, a couple approaching middle age
AARON and SARAH LUBLIN, Jewish refugees
BASELLECCI, an Italian teacher
JERRY WUNG, a Chinese beatnik
BEELER, an elderly widower
SHERYL, his daughter
KRAM, a hunchback retoucher of photographs
WADE JOHNSON, a schoolteacher
LENI CASS, a divorcee
J. T. and MILLY LEOPOLD, a retired carpenter and wife
ILSE MOELLER, a German emigrant
KARLOFF, a hundred-year-old Russian immigrant
SUGARMAN, a philosophical candy-butcher
JOE PAXTON, a Negro homosexual writer
DEL RIO, a boxer
LOUIE, a bachelor
JIM and JANE SPRAGUE, a young expectant couple

Published posthumously (Wallant died of an aneurysm in December, 1962, leaving this and another novel in manuscript), *The Tenants of Moonbloom* is a profoundly humorous novel centering its focus on an awakening which exhibits the intensities and accents of a religious conversion to human dignity without ever departing from the secular indignities of the human condition. The acerbities of its plot, the grotesquerie of its characterizations, and the slyness of its humor are the marks of Wallant's special talent, one removed from the current fashionable modes of writing. Although he was Jewish and specifically concerned with the treatment of Jewish themes, he is not a "Jewish writer" in the same sense as Bernard Malamud or Philip Roth. And although his work trafficks at the very heart of the existentialist intersection, he cannot be categorized with Heller, Pynchon, or Donleavy as practitioners of "the absurd." *The Tenants of Moonbloom*

falls between both camps, occupying its own lonely place that it has carved out for itself. It is possible, paradoxically, that this achievement of solitude is also the rare achievement of art and *The Tenants of Moonbloom* may continue to live after changing literary fashions have consigned much that is now more popular to less favored positions.

As Wallant's third novel, it represents a distinct technical development over his earlier work. In particular, the major structural crudities which marred *The Human Season*, in 1960, and *The Pawnbroker*, in 1961, have been eradicated or bypassed. *The Tenants of Moonbloom* folds itself tightly within the arc of Wallant's sure capacities as a novelist. He discards both the time-flashback techniques of the earlier novels and the limiting constriction within the reflecting consciousness of an older broken personality.

The focusing figure of this novel is Norman Moonbloom, the agent of the

convulsed miseries and frustrations of the four apartment houses which he serves. At the beginning of the novel, he is one of the unliving, moving through life inside an envelope of secure detachment. He is a thirty-three-year-old virgin—both physically and psychologically—unawakened, unhurt, and unjoying. Around him whirls the heterogeneous constellation of grotesques that are the tenants of his houses. They are sordid, posturing, desperate in their pain, humorous and dignified in the artifices they erect to ward off an acceptance of total squalor. Moonbloom moves through them week by week, collecting the rents, hearing their human cries like “the ear of God,” but without heed, without life.

The action of the novel is basically a chronicling of Moonbloom's reveille; a crude violent violation of his detachment which forces him to bear witness, to become alive himself. Like the ear of God he is privy to all the petty complaints and profound disclosures of his tenants, and he suddenly finds himself listening. The envelope has been burst; he is no longer asleep, he is ravished by the shock of existence. “Otherness” crushes him into the private being of selfhood and he discovers that being is unbearable unless it is put to some work. Perhaps, he explains to himself, he is attempting to find a name for what is happening, as he undertakes the gargantuan renovation program of painting, rewiring, repairing, cleaning, and ordering the four buildings in his charge. Nor does he fool himself as to the efficacy or motives of his actions. The child of one couple accidentally strangles to death, one tenant attempts suicide, another dies. Moonbloom himself is successfully seduced by one of the tenants for a reduction in the rent. All his paint and carpentry will not alter a deformed physique, a remembered betrayal, an impossibly frustrated desire. His struggle for cleanliness and physical decency is only secondarily for the benefit of the tenants; it is primarily a means to work himself on the new calendar of

his becoming.

The double renovation of the houses and Moonbloom reaches a climax in the rebuilding and plastering of the toilet wall in Basellecci's room at the end of the novel. Basellecci, dying of incurable cancer, had earlier blamed his disease on the tumorous bathroom wall, and with the medical reports pointing to the true cause he had succumbed to severe depression. Fortified on Strega and vermouth, Moonbloom, the plumber, and the janitor remake the wall in a drunken transcendent choreography of pain and joy, finding in a community of laughter a human acceptance and antidote to the inhuman absurdity of man's fated condition. The grip of the cancer is not denied, nor is the human fraternity assured any but the barest duration, but the wall shines with white plaster and the remembrance of a sacred joy.

However, rich in grotesque density and humor as *The Tenants of Moonbloom* is (the effects of the remodeling of the houses will be to make their assessed valuation prohibitively higher than Moonbloom's brother can afford), the aims and achievements of the novel go far beyond its restricting grotesqueries. Wallant's realism is psychological and introspective, not reportorial, and this realism is at the service of an evocative overarch of symbolism. The search for a name to what is happening is as much a description of Wallant's own building attempts in the making of his novel as it is for Moonbloom laboring in the cumulative filth and disorder of his Augean tenements. The reader is inexorably drawn into Moonbloom's metaphor, himself forced to burst the barrier of detachment and work at his own psychic renewal. On this level the novel scores a signal success; within the severe aesthetic limitations in which such a statement can be true, Wallant's readers all become tenants of Moonbloom, exposed to the raw slash of “otherness” and led to a perverse joy in their own augmented selfhood.

It is fashionable today for fiction to be ambiguous, problematical, contemptuous of traditional pieties, and irreverent in its embracement of absurdism as the irrational rationale for everything. These may all be legitimate positions from which to write novels, but they may also be lazy avoidances or cowardly failures to face up to resolvable questions. Wallant faces directly each of the problems which emerges from his work. The absurd and

the problematic figure in his novel as inescapable but not dominating elements. He is able to wrest a form out of the chaos of our contemporary experiences which goes beyond a queasy burlesque nihilism, which accents human possibilities rather than niggling determinisms, and which communicates itself in the tones of a sacred laughter that is within the reach of the human voice and spirit.

LA TESEIDE

Type of work: Poetry

Author: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

Type of plot: Medieval romance

Time of plot: Ancient Greece

Locale: Athens

First transcribed: c. 1341

Principal characters:

TESEO, King of Greece

IPOLITA, his wife

EMILIA, her sister

ACATE, Teseo's kinsman

CREONTE, the leader against Teseo

ARCITA and

PALEMONE, cousins and soldiers of Creonte

PERITOO, a nobleman, the friend to Teseo

Critique:

Boccaccio wrote the *La Teseide* in 1339 and 1340 when it seemed that his liaison with Maria d'Aquino, to whom the poem is dedicated, was coming to a hopeless conclusion. The work is therefore assumed to be autobiographical in nature. The plot is primarily modeled on Statius' *Thebaid* and partly on Vergil's *Aeneid*. It is principally noted for its influence on Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale," as well as on Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The Story:

While Egeu was King of Athens, the women of Scythia rebelled against the men and elected Ipolita queen. Teseo proposed to purge this sin and set sail with an army to fight the Amazons. When Teseo attacked the fortress of

Queen Ipolita, he received a message from her saying that he should desist or be driven away. He in turn told her that she must surrender or die. Ipolita decided to surrender under a pact whereby she became Teseo's bride. After the wedding, Teseo was struck by the beauty of Ipolita's sister Emilia. He decided to marry her to his kinsman Arcate.

Two years later, Teseo, Ipolita, and Emilia sailed to Athens. On his return Teseo learned that Creonte had attacked Thebes and, hating the Greeks, had prohibited the burial of the dead Thebans. Teseo vowed to defeat Creonte so that the men of the weeping Athenian women could have a proper burial. Teseo and his men followed the women to the scene of battle and confronted Creonte. After the warriors had challenged one another, the two armies fought. During the battle

Teseo encountered Creonte and killed him. Creonte's men fled to the mountains. Teseo then told the women to collect the bodies of their men and burn them in proper ceremony.

Meanwhile, some Athenian soldiers had found two wounded youths of Creonte's army, Palemone and Arcita, whose armor showed them to be of royal blood. When they were brought before Teseo, he had them cured and taken as prisoners back to Athens.

Several days after his triumphant return to Athens, Teseo summoned Palemone and Arcita and sentenced them to eternal imprisonment in the palace where, because of their station, they would be treated well.

On a day in the following spring, as Arcita was opening the window of his prison chamber, he saw Emilia in the garden below. He was so overwhelmed by her beauty that he believed her to be Venus. Arcita summoned Palemone; both immediately proclaimed their love for her. Emilia heard them and left, but every morning she returned and, because of her vanity, sang in the garden below their window. Each day the youths became more in love with her. In the autumn, however, she ceased her morning stroll, and Palemone and Arcita became desperate.

At that time Teseo was visited by his friend Peritoo. When Teseo mentioned his two prisoners to Peritoo, the visitor asked to see them. Peritoo, recognizing Arcita as an old friend, requested that Teseo release him. Arcita left Athens with great sadness, for he did not wish to leave his companion Palemone in prison, nor did he want to leave Emilia. Palemone believed that Arcita was fortunate in being able to travel and alleviate his pain while he was forced to be confined.

Later, calling himself Penteo, Arcita returned to Athens in disguise. He managed to obtain a position with Teseo and became his favorite servant. He was not able to keep his identity secret from Emilia, but she did not reveal what she knew

and he was able to contain his desire for her by sleeping in a field three miles from the city. There he prayed each night to Venus to encourage Emilia to love him.

One morning, as Arcita was returning to the palace from his abode, one of Palemone's servants heard Arcita's lamentations and discovered his true identity. He returned to the prison and told Palemone that Penteo was actually Arcita. This information enraged Palemone. He decided to escape and conquer Emilia by armed force.

With the help of his servant, who intoxicated the guards, Palemone escaped and went to an inn. The next morning he armed himself and went to the place where Arcita slept. After professing their love for Emilia, the kinsmen decided that a sword fight would determine the winner of her hand. They began to fight savagely.

Teseo and Emilia, who were hunting with some companions, chanced to pass the field where the battle was taking place, and Emilia summoned Teseo to stop the fight. After Teseo confronted the youths, they informed him of their mutual love for Emilia. Believing that both men were qualified to be her husband, Teseo proposed a battle in the theater to decide who should have her hand. The conditions of the battle were that one year from that day the cousins should each bring one hundred chosen soldiers.

During the next year Arcita and Palemone passed the time with lavish feasts, hunts, jousts, and finally with preparations for the battle. As the day approached, great noblemen and warriors came to the city, all elaborately dressed and armed. There was one last great feast for all the soldiers and nobility.

On the day before the battle Arcita and Palemone prayed to the gods. Arcita prayed to Mars, promising that if he should be made victor, he would give great honor to Mars and his temples. To this plea, Mars gave a sign that the vow had been heard. Palemone, on the other hand, went to the temple of Cytheraea.

where he prayed not for victory, but for the hand of Emilia, and he too received a sign. Emilia, not wishing harm to either suitor, prayed to the goddess Diana in whose temple she kindled two fires. She asked that the desires of the two lovers be quenched. If she had to accept one, however, she prayed that it would be the lover who desired her most. She received a sign that she would have one of the two, but that the outcome could not yet be revealed.

The next day the spectators and soldiers gathered in the great theater. Arcita and his men entered from the east, Palemone and his men from the west. At the sound of the third call to battle, the fight began with many noblemen wounding one another. The sight of the battlefield wet with blood and so many men dying for her caused Emilia to wish that Teseo had let the two finish the fight in the grove. Shortly, the warriors became tired and perplexed, but Arcita, spurred on by Mars, fought more fiercely than ever, causing Emilia's affection to turn to him. Arcita, victorious, circled the field with his men.

Venus, who had watched the battle with Mars, each concerned for their respective champions, told Mars that his

part was over, for he had granted Arcita's prayer. She then directed Erinis to frighten Arcita's steed. The horse reared and Arcita fell mortally wounded. Both Emilia and Palemone were grief-stricken at the sight of dying Arcita. A doctor was summoned and Arcita was carried to the palace and placed on a great bed. There he and Emilia were married by Teseo, and Palemone was set free. Knowing that he would die with his love unsummed, Arcita summoned Palemone and told him that he should take Emilia. Emilia refused to accept Palemone. She told Arcita that she would die a virgin.

After nine days of great suffering, Arcita died, and Teseo ordered a great funeral ceremony for the dead warrior. Later Palemone had a temple built to Juno to contain Arcita's ashes. In it were represented all the adventures of Arcita's life. Emilia's grief for her dead husband caused her to become sickly, and it was therefore agreed that her lamentation should cease and that she would be wedded to Palemone. Teseo told them that Arcita lived well and had been mourned enough. Palemone and Arcita were then married. A great feast was held for fifteen days to celebrate their wedding.

THAT UNCERTAIN FEELING

Type of work: Novel

Author: Kingsley Amis (1922-)

Time: The mid-1950's

Locale: Aberdarcy, a small Welsh city

First published: 1955

Principal characters:

JOHN ANEURIN LEWIS, a young, underpaid assistant librarian

JEAN LEWIS, his wife

VERNON GRUFFYDD-WILLIAMS, a wealthy power in the town

ELIZABETH GRUFFYDD-WILLIAMS, his wife

IEUAN JENKINS, John's co-worker, afflicted by timidity and a neurotic wife

BILL EVANS, Elizabeth's former lover

GARETH PROBERT, a local poet and office worker

MRS. EDNA DAVIES, Lewis' downstairs neighbor

KEN DAVIES, her loutish son

PAUL WHETSTONE, an effeminate friend of the Gruffydd-Williamses

Jim Dixon, the hero of *Lucky Jim*, Kingsley Amis' first and more widely praised novel, is in danger of being trapped by the wrong woman, the wrong town, and the wrong job; since he is not committed to any of them, there are no moral obstacles to his discarding them when vastly superior substitutes appear; his only problem is to convince himself that their superiority is sufficient reason for him not only to prefer them but also to follow up his preferences.

For John Lewis, the hero of *That Uncertain Feeling*, matters are more difficult. Lewis has an ill-paying job, a wife, two children, a depressing apartment, and the desire, though not the means, to change matters. When the means present themselves, they merely make for more trouble because, as he recognizes at the end of the novel, he will always be torn between wanting to be moral and wanting to do things that are immoral; this is the only thing he can be certain of. It is as natural for him to want to be faithful to his wife as it is for him to prefer a woman whom nature and circumstances have treated with more kindness. These problems admit to no easy resolution; unlike Jim Dixon's predicament, in *Lucky Jim*, no new job or new woman can solve the basic problem, even though both are available.

This, then, is a serious book and a very funny book; it is also an honest book, in that it slights neither the humor of the situation into which Lewis pilots himself nor the toughness of his moral dilemma. It has been argued that there is too much of a clash between the almost slapstick comedy that Amis creates so brilliantly and the decidedly not funny dilemma faced by his hero. This view, however, is to forget that the classic function of comedy is to enlighten. Amis uses his comic techniques to unmask, to discover what the truth is; that some of the truths discovered are less than pleasant neither obviates nor invalidates the comedy by which they are uncovered.

Lewis works in the library of a small Welsh city, Aberdarcy, making barely enough money to keep his wife Jean and their two small children in an uncomfortable attic apartment. The sub-librarianship—a fairly well-paying job—is open and he, along with Ieuan Jenkins of the library and two outsiders, is in the running for the job. His chances are greatly improved when he meets Elizabeth Gruffydd-Williams, whose husband is very rich and very influential, a member of the Town Council and of the Libraries Committee. Most of the novel is concerned with Lewis' entry, with Elizabeth's help, into the world of the quasi-aristocracy of Aberdarcy, and with the effect this has on his life.

He first meets Elizabeth when she comes to the library looking for a book on ancient Welsh costumes; she is in charge of costume design for the local theater group's presentation of Gareth Probert's nonsensical verse drama, *The Martyr*. Mrs. Gruffydd-Williams' social status, her interest in costumes, Probert's ostentatiously Dylanesque play, and the use of the Welsh mother tongue are all of a piece. Disguises—literal costumes as well as the figurative disguises of speech, manner, and affectation, and the more devious and deeply seated disguises of personality—crop up continually in the novel. The Welsh revival, exemplified and defined as acting by Probert and his play, and the Anglicized Welsh aristocracy, Elizabeth and her crowd, are both treated in terms of disguise, as masking of true intention. Lewis himself is often acting—trying, for example, to imitate movie stars—and he is a very bad actor. Other actors include Ken Davies, son of Lewis' unpleasant downstairs neighbor and his Americanized friends, and Mrs. Jenkins, whose migraine headaches are a psychological act.

Indeed, everyone in the novel is in disguise. Amis suggests, by adumbrating countless instances and varieties of disguise, that this is (a) a universal trait and

(b) potentially dangerous, depending not on how good the acting is or even on what particular disguise is chosen, but rather on what motivates a given disguise. Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins are pathetic characters because they fail to recognize their own play-acting; Probert is foolish because he dissembles so badly; Vernon Gruffydd-Williams is frightening because he acts so well and sees so clearly through the disguises of others; Ken Davies' disguise is irrelevant, because his good-heartedness easily transcends it.

The production of the play is at the center of the novel. Lewis goes with Elizabeth; up to this point they have been slowly flirting their way into an affair, but very slowly; half way through this bad performance they leave and go to Elizabeth's house. Here a much livelier and funnier play begins; even their abortive attempt to go to bed is full of bad acting. When Elizabeth's husband comes home unexpectedly, Lewis prepares to pretend that he is picking up the contents of a cigarette box (unnecessarily, for Vernon does not bother to look in on them); then, trying to get out of the house, he pretends to a stray guest that he is a plumber; finally he dons a spare Welsh woman's costume, which establishes an ironic connection between Lewis and the play he has been scorning.

Lewis and Elizabeth finally do make love, but under very different circumstances. Elizabeth's crowd, consisting of a local dentist and his mistress, a local composer and his wife, two homosexuals, and a still devoted but apparently rejected former lover, Bill Evans, have a party on the beach the night after Lewis' interview for the sub-librarianship. The party turns into a very small-scale orgy, in the course of which Lewis makes two discoveries: that he would as soon be sleeping with the dentist's mistress as with Elizabeth and that he is to get his promotion, but only because Vernon wants to spite the head librarian by choosing someone antagonistic to him. That is, he finds out that sex *per se* is largely a neutral matter

and that advancement in the world of small-town politics is, as he puts it, "a fiddle"; everything is rigged according to influence. And when, after Elizabeth smashes up her car, he sees Vernon in total control of her, he recognizes—without quite understanding—the depth of Vernon's involvement with her and the shallowness of his own.

When he gets home Probert is there with Jean. Acting a bit like Vernon in the previous scene, he chases Probert out. Jean announces that she does not care if he sleeps with Elizabeth, but that he has no right to give up his promotion on a moral scruple; in fact, she says that she and Probert are having an affair, that their marriage will henceforth be only "a domestic arrangement," and that he should patch things up with Elizabeth to make sure he gets the job.

There follows a crucial incident, rather mysterious to both Lewis and the reader. Feeling some great but nameless fear, and a need to do something even more frightening to counter it, Lewis runs through the darkened streets of the town, apparently with the idea of suicide in mind—not to get out of a difficult situation, but to do something "that doesn't just happen," that would be done all by himself. Running through the streets, he finds Ken Davies drunk and beaten (Davies' mother had earlier asked Lewis to go look for him). He helps Davies home, and also makes up his mind about the future. He will keep on trying not to be immoral; perhaps, in the end, only trying will turn into a habit.

The novel's last scene shows the result of this decision. Though offered the sub-librarianship, he moves back to his father's home and takes a sales job at a small colliery; everything is patched up with Jean; and, finally, the reader sees him resisting, successfully but with some difficulty, a new flirtation.

The somewhat unexpected turns toward the end of the novel, especially Lewis' evidently half-unconscious flirtation with suicide, bring to the surface a

dimension of the story only implicit in the early stages: the question of the responsibilities of involvement with another person. Lewis is almost as guilty for not becoming completely involved with Elizabeth as for becoming involved at all. One of the things that oppresses him is that coming into contact with other people is not a simple act, that so doing puts him into their lives. The abortive suicide episode illustrates that to live at all means to become involved in the affairs of other people, and therefore, at least for a person of Lewis' temperament, to take some

responsibility for them. The affair with Elizabeth seems at first like an escape from a tedious job and a squalid home, but as the disguises, his own and everyone else's, fall away, Lewis finds it to be at least as complicated and demanding as that which he is trying to escape. Once again the congruence of the rather stern and difficult moral strain with the comic format of the novel is apparent: comedy unmasks, and the more it does so, the more it shows the complexity of the dilemmas faced by the hero, and the more he learns that every act is consequential.

THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS

Type of work: Sociological essay

Author: Thorsten Veblen (1857-1929)

First published: 1899

The story of Veblen's life seems sad to the modern reader: he had much trouble adapting himself to American life. Born of Norwegian parents in Wisconsin, educated at Carleton College, Johns Hopkins, and Yale, Veblen could find no appropriate academic employment until about seven years after he had been awarded his doctorate. Then, as a teacher at the University of Chicago and Stanford, his eccentricities and irregularities made him socially unacceptable. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* was the first of a series of books in which he examined the nature of that society which did not accept him, which found him unsuited to it. Fairness of some of his judgments or the validity of some of his inferences may be questioned but one cannot question the ironic wit with which Veblen dissects American society. He is, in fact, in the great tradition of American humorists who assume a mask of simplicity for comic effect. With a straight face the sociologist demonstrates that "the relation of football to physical culture is much the same as that of the bull-fight to agriculture" or that "the ultimate ground for decency among civilized people [is] serviceability for the purpose of invidious

comparison in pecuniary success." Veblen has, of course, an extremely serious charge to make, but one must not fail to note the ironic and witty way in which he frames that charge.

Veblen states that the purpose of his study in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* is to discuss the place and value of that class as an economic factor in modern life. Historically, the leisure class develops at the higher stages of barbarian culture. The occupations of this nonproductive class are government, warfare, religious observance, and sports. Communities with a leisure class must be predatory and rich enough to exempt a number of its members from everyday industry. Male members of the leisure class live for predatory exploit; women and lower class men live for drudgery. Possession of goods shows the success of the barbarian in predatory exploits. Possession of wealth becomes the basis for esteem. The drive to obtain esteem and respect, therefore, takes the form of pecuniary emulation. Pecuniary emulation requires that a man ostentatiously refrain from productive work if he hopes to earn esteem. Leisure, the non-productive consumption of time, is evidence of pecuniary ability to

afford a life of idleness. A servant or wife can perform leisure in behalf of the head of the household so as to demonstrate that he has the pecuniary ability to maintain several people in leisure. Hence vicarious leisure performed by dependents can earn esteem for the master.

Likewise, the conspicuous consumption of goods, whether personally by a master or vicariously by his dependents, demonstrates his pecuniary strength and earns esteem for him. But opposed to the desire for esteem which is gratified by conspicuous consumption and leisure, there is an instinct for workmanship, a desire to be useful and productive. Nevertheless, pecuniary emulation forces the standard of living of any class to the greatest possible cost with a tendency to go higher still. Pecuniary emulation also enforces pecuniary canons of taste by which expensive things seem good and beautiful, whereas less costly things seem ugly and cheap. Thus clothing is not selected for utility or beauty but to appear costly and to prove that the wearer could not be engaged in productive labor.

The leisure class is slower to feel economic pressure than the productive class. It is therefore always conservative in relation to social change. Since conservative thought is characteristic of the upper class, the conservative posture gains a spurious honorific and decorative value. The leisure class conserves archaic traits of character in its members: ferocity, self-seeking, clannishness, and a free use of force and fraud. These characteristics are inimical to useful production which is best served by good nature, equity, and sympathy. The leisure class addiction to sports is evidence of reversion to a barbarian and predatory mentality.

The temperament of sportsmen implies a more or less articulate belief in an inscrutable preternatural agency, luck. Characteristically, this animistic habit of thought in the leisure class acts to blur a clear vision of causal sequences. The productive part of the society, however, depends on a clear understanding of causal sequences. The animistic habit appears in the tendency of the leisure class to believe in anthropomorphic divinity, whereas the working class is inclined to abandon anthropomorphic religion. The priestly classes engage in vicarious conspicuous leisure and consumption to earn esteem for their gods in the same way the wife engages in conspicuous consumption to the credit of her master.

In education, the distinction between lower and higher learning is the difference between that which contributes to production and that which does not. A trade school in a poor community seldom has archaic regalia or ritual, but a school aimed at education of the leisure class in consumption rather than production will generally have atavistic features such as medieval gowns and elaborate Latin degree ceremonies. It will likewise establish classical languages and other useless subjects as the core of its discipline. The motive for classical studies thus resides in the nature of the leisure class which finds the study of Latin and Greek commendable because it serves no useful purpose and so constitutes conspicuous consumption and leisure to a high degree. Recently the interest in college athletics has begun to supplant the classical curriculum as the center of college life because it too is an extreme example of conspicuous consumption and nonproductive leisure.

THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?

Type of work: Novel

Author: Horace McCoy (1897-1955)

Time: The 1930's

Locale: An amusement pier near Hollywood, California

First published: 1935

Principal characters:

ROBERT SYVERTEN, a young contestant in a dance marathon

GLORIA BEATTY, his partner

ROCKY GRAVO, the master of ceremonies

VINCENT (SOCKS) DONALD, a promoter

MRS. LAYDEN, an elderly spectator

Horace McCoy's *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* is an excellent example of the tough-guy fiction that flourished during the 1930's. Full of violence, sex, and hard-boiled talk, McCoy's five novels resemble the works of Hammett, Chandler, Cain, and B. Traven.

But Robert, the young narrator who aspires to become a film director like Eisenstein, is no hoodlum. His tough tone simply reflects the effect a brutalizing experience has had upon him. An unemployed movie extra in the middle of the depression, Robert meets Gloria, a not very attractive, unemployed extra who persuades him to enter a marathon dance contest as her partner. Both have come to Hollywood, glamor capital of the world, from small Southern towns, lured by the American dream of sudden success. After an unsuccessful suicide attempt before she left home, Gloria is now being "razzed" by an expert—God; but she lacks the courage to kill herself. Her verbal signature throughout the contest is some variation on the refrain, "I wish I was dead." Opposed to this total despair is Robert's typical American optimism; but he ends a victim of Gloria's nihilistic vision. Robert and Gloria exist only in terms of their situation as contestants; they have almost no past, and their future is violent death.

The contest is held on an amusement pier in an old building that was once a public dance hall. One hundred and forty couples enter: professional marathon dancers and amateurs, like Robert and Gloria. Floor judges, nurses, and a house doctor are in attendance; contestants are allowed to continue only if they are in good physical condition. The dancing area is thirty by one hundred feet; there are logs, circus, or general admis-

sion seats, and a bar. Contestants dance one hour and fifty minutes; during the ten-minute rest intervals, they sleep, eat, shave, bathe, excrete, change clothes. The trick is to learn to do several things at once. After the first week, contestants need not dance, they must simply keep moving; all employees of the hall must constantly be in motion. Local sponsors of individual couples provide equipment and costumes, the company name across the chest, the contestant's number on his back. Thus, Robert and Gloria become "Jonathan Beer." Specialty numbers draw a shower of silver; but one couple, who do a lifeless tap-dance, declare that you are better off without a specialty. In the derby, a nightly fifteen-minute heel-and-toe endurance race, Robert soon stops trying to win and strives merely to keep from coming in last, to avoid being disqualified. If a dancer loses his partner, because of menstrual pains or a heart attack, for instance, he may couple with another lone survivor; casualties are scarcely missed. A tub of ice water awaits those who faint; thus is Robert shocked out of a dream of being a film director. The main inducement for staying in the contest is that one knows where his next meal is coming from; food and bed are free as long as the contestant endures. For the winning couple the purse is one thousand dollars, and every one has the same chance, according to Rocky Gravo, the master of ceremonies. There is also the chance of being "discovered" by a movie producer, though after the second day each contestant resembles a zombie. It is a contest of "endurance and skill"; one must have the skill to endure.

Gloria's attitude is overwhelmingly cynical. She and Robert are on a merry-go-round; when the dance is over, they

will get off where they got on. Eating and sleeping is merely a postponing of death. Responding to Robert's expression of sympathy for one of the dancers who is arrested as a fugitive murderer, Gloria suggests that they are all condemned fugitives. "Socks," the promoter, appreciates the publicity; anything that draws the crowds is good. He asks Gloria and Robert to get married on the dance floor as a "high class" entertainment feature; they can get a divorce after the contest closes. Gloria refuses; Robert is afraid the angry promoter will disqualify them. Gloria, who wishes she had never been born, encourages one of the dancers who is pregnant to abort the child because it will only end up the same way.

In the 1920's and the 1930's, dance marathons, an import from Europe, were held in every major American city. Hollywood is a particularly apt symbolic setting for McCoy's marathon: it represents the public Eden to which few are admitted; the rejects end up on the dance floor. The roll call of actual celebrities among the spectators is effective, more so today since we can see what fame comes to. In the context of the depression, the spectators are the corrupt rich being amused by the antics of the work horses, but ultimately spectator and dancer reverse roles. Just as the dance, symbol of the new postwar morality, became perverted by the marathon, sexual perversion is part of the experience. Gloria is about to submit to lesbians to get what she wants; Mrs. Layden, a wealthy old woman who comes every night to watch, lusts for Robert. Robert and Gloria are not in love; there is not even a sexual tie. About to do a favor for a nymphomaniac dancer under the bandstand, Robert is interrupted by a voice in the dark; later, he learns that Gloria was nearby with Rocky. Rocky's monotonous exhortation to the orchestra, the dancers (especially the female), and the audience is "Give!"

When a rich spectator finally shows an interest in her, Gloria, ironically, is

too devoid of hope to respond. She declares that she is glad she is through with life. In the midst of a fight in the bar, the cause of which is never disclosed, five shots are fired. Mrs. Layden, on her way to the platform to judge the derby, is an accidental target. Ironically, old Mrs. Layden wanted to live to make love to young Robert, while Gloria wishes the bullet had struck herself. Without a winner, the marathon ends on the dictate of chance. Robert and Gloria walk out onto the pier. She persuades him that she is no good to herself nor to anyone else, that she is better off dead. He shoots her to put her out of her misery. Ironically, his lawyer instructs Robert to throw himself on the mercy of the court; but the court gives him, against his will, what he gave Gloria at her own request—oblivion.

While the marathon dance symbolizes man's predicament in the 1930's, it is almost perfect as a symbolic expression of the universal human predicament. While McCoy's central symbolic action is realistically true and stark, and never literary, the dance draws to itself many traditional connotations that enhance the significance of the marathon. In mythic terms, the grinding dance is like Sisyphus' struggle to push his rock to the top of the mountain; the ten-minute rest periods are like his moment of freedom as he returns to his burden on the plain. In the simple event of the dance, we experience a pure existential situation that exemplifies the absurd nature of life.

Among the most effective motifs, all of which McCoy develops quite naturally, is the incessant pounding of the ocean under the floor; like the slow ticking of the clock and the slow movement of its hands in relation to the movements of the dancer's legs, the surf counterpoints the dance. Robert used to love the ocean; now he hates it. Gloria observes that the waves have been moving for a million years; it is between the rising and falling of a wave that Robert honors her plea that he shoot her. Robert used to dislike the sun; now he tries to absorb every mo-

ment of sunlight that falls through a crack in the roof of the windowless hall. Gloria observes that he moves like a ballet dancer as he follows the dime-sized ray of sun. McCoy suggests the existential idea that man can expect only rare moments of natural bliss. Ironically, the brief respite, by allowing time to reflect on its context, is sometimes too bitter, and Robert is glad when the siren calls him back to the dance floor.

The form of this novel is strictly congruent with all its elements. Juxtaposition is McCoy's most effective technique for controlling and conceptualizing his raw material. Robert's story is presented as an interior monologue, the thirteen unlucky parts of which are juxtaposed to fragments of the sentence of death which a judge is pronouncing upon him. On the first page a single statement directs the prisoner to stand. The next page begins as he stands up. The ironic immediacy of the sentence lends an immediacy to Robert's memory of the dance. The initial image is Gloria's face the moment after Robert fires the gun; at the end, the firing itself is depicted. Thus, the brevity of the novel gives the impression of a single juxtaposition. The marriage ceremony on the dance floor is juxtaposed to the Lord's prayer, which is juxtaposed to the killings in the bar. Another graphic device is the

score box that heads the last four chapters, showing: ELAPSED HOURS. COUPLES REMAINING. As the hours accumulate, the judge's words grow larger and larger on the page. On the last he invokes God's mercy on the prisoner's soul.

As he tells it from the vantage of the prisoner's dock, Robert comments briefly (in italics) on his own story. Before he shoots Gloria, he recalls the shooting of his grandfather's horse when Robert was a child. Thus, the present was given in the past; the sentence he hears now, as he recalls the past, was passed during the dance, before the murder, because it is inherent in the nature of things. McCoy's structure gives us a sense of the simultaneity of the sentence with the conditions that produced the "crime." Robert concludes that while the tune varies, the dance, one's experiences, are the same; nothing is new. The novel is superbly compressed: Robert's meeting Gloria is briefly described and their parting briefly depicted: the 879-hour-long dance is the large center of the action. The brevity of the killing and of the sentence, of the book itself, is an ironic comment on the length, the prolonged agony of the dance. It is singularly appropriate that dance-murder-trial be compressed within the judge's sentence.

TIGER AT THE GATES

Type of work: Drama

Author: Jean Giraudoux (1882-1944)

Time: The Trojan War

Locale: Troy

First presented: 1935

Principal characters:

HECTOR, the Trojan hero and a man of good will, the son of Priam

ANDROMACHE, his wife

PARIS, his younger brother

HELEN, beloved of Paris

PRIAM, King of Troy

HECUBA, his wife

CASSANDRA, the daughter of Hecuba and Priam, a prophetess

ULYSSES, the Greek ambassador

AJAX, a Greek warrior

DEMOKOS, a poet, and

In 1935, Giraudoux's play now called *Tiger at the Gates* was produced in Paris under the title of *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (*The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*). Four years later its thesis that war is inevitable was substantiated by the outbreak of World War II. Repeatedly reviewed since its initial production, it demonstrates that Giraudoux's wit, aimed at the follies of mankind, delights the theater-going public.

Events leading up to the outbreak of the Trojan War provide the plot, but the emphasis lies rather on destiny as it appears to various people. The tiger crouching outside the gates of Troy is destiny waiting to spring at the crucial moment.

The people within the gates are those of Troy whose names Homer made famous but whose characters have undergone a change—sometimes subtle, sometimes radical—under Giraudoux's hand. In the change, Helen is an empty-headed, though still beautiful, courtesan. Paris is a perennial playboy who could not resist stealing Helen. They do not love each other, and each is willing to give up the other, at Hector's insistence, to prevent war. It is not their fault that war comes inevitably. They are not tragic figures; as a matter of fact, they are funny as they play out the satire of Homer's epic story.

Although Giraudoux tampers with the characters that have come down to us from Greek story and legend, he hews to a line of reasoning derived from similar sources filled with situations comparable to the one he puts on the stage. Hector and his soldiers, just returned from war, want peace but are overruled by people at home who desire a continuation of the emotion of patriotism, the glory of self-sacrifice, the pride and enthusiasm for war whipped up by their civilian leaders. Even the gods send messengers with warnings so contrary that Hector and Ulysses, soldiers of Troy and Greece,

while agreeing to settle their differences without war, know that it will probably come in spite of them. There is only a question of when the tiger will spring.

In the beginning of the play Hector's wife Andromache joyfully tells Cassandra, his sister, that there will be no Trojan war because Hector, as soon as he comes home, will assuage the feelings of the Greek ambassador. Cassandra, true to her reputation, claims that she knows destiny will provoke a war, not because she can prophesy but because she always takes into account the stupidity and folly of men. Since Andromache cannot understand destiny in the abstract, Cassandra offers her the picture of the tiger prowling at the palace gates and waiting for the moment to enter.

Hector, home from war, is delighted to hear that Andromache will soon bear a child that she expects to be a son. Andromache fears that the child will have his father's love of battle, but Hector assures her that he and his soldiers have come back this time disabused of their former ideas of war as a glorious adventure. They are all ready for peace, and he intends to get from his father, Priam, permission to shut the gates of war permanently.

Cassandra brings the younger brother Paris to Hector to give his version of his abduction of Helen. He tells Hector that he had happened to sail past Helen while she was bathing in the sea. While Menelaus was busy removing a crab from his toe, Paris had casually taken her into his ship and sailed on. He likes her because she, unlike clutching Trojan women, seems always to be at a distance, even while in his arms. This is not the first time Hector has taken Paris away from a woman, but Paris resists obeying Hector, promising instead to obey Priam, his father.

Cassandra realizes that destiny is already restive because Priam would rather

give up his own daughters than let Helen leave the kingdom. Priam and all the other old men in Troy spend their days admiring Helen as she takes a daily walk around Troy, to be greeted by toothless shouts whenever she appears. To the old men Helen is a symbol; she is Beauty. Hecuba, Priam's wife, suggests that the old men would do well to find a symbol among their own Trojan women, and not a blonde one like Helen, because blonde beauty fades fast. But the men are intoxicated by Helen. The poet, of course, gets his inspiration from her. The mathematician finds that all measurements now relate to Helen—the weight of her footfall, the length of her arm, the range of her look. By the time they all argue the justification of war for Helen's sake, Paris is willing to let Hector handle the situation because he feels humiliated to be cast as the seducer-son in a large family. He brings Helen to Hector.

While Hector talks with her in his attempt to avoid conflict between Greeks and Trojans, he finds that Helen is completely unpredictable. It is hard to tell whether she has any sense at all or whether she depends implicitly on fate to do what it will with her. She agrees to leave Troy because she can no longer see Paris plainly. She claims also that she never had seen Menelaus plainly and supposes she had often walked over him without realizing it. But she warns that she sees a battle raging, a city burning, a figure in the dust that she recognizes as Paris only by his ring. Still, she admits that things she sees do not always come to pass, and she promises to leave Troy with Ulysses. Left with Cassandra, Helen begs Cassandra to make Peace appear, but she cannot see the figure until Peace paints herself outrageously. By that time men are shouting that the gods have been insulted and have struck down the temple. Peace becomes sick.

As Hector prepares to shut the gates of war, Helen turns her blandishments on the young Troilus, who refuses to kiss

her. She promises him that her chance will come later. The poet, the mathematician, and friends prepare for war by agreeing on a war song and by discussing the usefulness to soldiers of insulting epithets.

In spite of their opposition, and dire forebodings by a traveling expert on the rights of nations (whose interpretations of the Greeks' arrival are reversed at Hector's insistence), Hector makes an ironic Oration for the Dead and closes the gates of war just before the Greeks come ashore.

Ajax is the first Greek to reach Hector. He comes insultingly and strikes Hector on the cheek, but Hector refuses to rise to the insult. When the poet calls shame on him, Hector strikes the poet, who vows revenge. Ajax, amused at the change of circumstances and admiring Hector's courage, swears he will not fight against him.

Hector promises Ajax and Ulysses that he will give Helen back to them. To Ulysses' questioning as to whether there had been cause for reprisals, Paris' crew tell of Paris and Helen's apparent delight in each other on the trip to Troy. Ulysses feels that war is inevitable but, in talking to Hector as soldier to soldier, he regrets it, particularly since the cause of it is Helen, a woman of shallow brain, hard heart, and narrow understanding of sex. Still trying to defy destiny, Ulysses attempts to get back to his ship.

Ajax is a little slower and is caught when the poet, struck down by Hector, calls for war and cries out that Ajax has killed him. The crowd kills Ajax as the gates of war open to show Helen kissing Troilus.

The play is many things to many people, for it fits into no specific category. Some regard it as a pacifist play; some think it emphasizes the inevitability of war; some see it as presenting the idea that idealistic efforts to prevent war serve only to provoke it. Some have been impressed by the wit expressed in the play, others by its grandeur, and still others by its brilliance. Clearly, Giraudoux

wrote the play in such fashion that the viewer or the reader must determine its merits and meanings for himself—hence

the continuing interest of the drama to citizens of a threatened, disordered world.

THE TIN DRUM

Type of work: Novel

Author: Günter Grass (1927-)

Time: 1899-1954

Locale: Poland and Germany

First published: 1959

Principal characters:

OSKAR MATZERATH, the narrator and hero

AGNES MATZERATH, his mother

ALFRED MATZERATH, her husband

JAN BRONSKI, Mrs. Matzerath's cousin and lover, possibly Oskar's father

MR. BEBRA, a circus midget and universal artist

ROSWITHA RAGUNA, his shorter associate, the most celebrated somnambulist in all Italy

HERBERT TRUCZINSKI, neighbor of the Matzeraths

MARIA TRUCZINSKI, Herbert's youngest sister

GREFF, a greengrocer

LINA GREFF, his wife

SISTER DOROTHEA KÖNGETTER, a trained nurse, a neighbor of Oskar in Düsseldorf

GOTTFRIED VON VITTLAR, whose testimony leads to Oskar's arrest; later Oskar's friend

The Tin Drum, a panoramic, satiric novel in which the anguished and the absurd mingle and in which the history of modern Germany is viewed through the eyes of a self-willed dwarf, marked the beginning of Günter Grass's career as a novelist. In its way the book is a milestone in the history of German letters, somewhat reminiscent of the appearance of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* in 1901. But to say that Grass's book is about as auspicious a novelistic beginning as *Buddenbrooks* is to suggest little more similarity with Mann than that of length and quality, for *The Tin Drum*, though it shows some signs of being a curiously gnarled hybrid variety of the German family chronicle, though in fact one can trace its lineage back to a multitude of traditions, is a novel which cannot fit neatly into any fixed category, which is a category in itself.

The narrator of the novel is Oskar Matzerath, who tells his story from the insane asylum in which he is being held

for a murder he did not commit. The question of Oskar's sanity is a little pointless. In the light of the mad world around him, his violent, bizarre outlook is the only vision imaginable. Oskar's story begins in 1899, when his Kashubian grandmother, sitting in a potato field, conceals under her wide skirts from the view of pursuing constables the fugitive Joseph Koljaiczek, and thereby conceives Oskar's mother. The incident, in its wild humor and eroticism and its suggestion of political chaos, is endemic of what is to come. In 1923, in the free city of Danzig, Agnes Koljaiczek marries Alfred Matzerath, a citizen of the German Reich, and introduces him to her Polish cousin and lover, Jan Bronski, with whom he becomes fast friends. Thereafter the amazing Oskar is born, an infant whose mental development is complete at birth.

Oskar is promised a drum for his third birthday, the drum which in its many avatistic recurrences will allow him mutely to voice his protest against the

meaninglessness of a world which formulates its destructive nonsense in empty language and to re-create the history of his consciousness, to recall in the varied music of the drum the rhythms of his mind's apprehension of the world around it, apprehensions earlier accompanied by the drum. It is also on his third birthday that Oskar decides to stop growing by a sheer act of will, to remain with his three-year-old body and his totally conscious mind for the rest of his life. As he boasts, he remains from then on a precocious three-year-old in a world of adults who tower over him, but superior to them because he is complete both inside and out, free from all necessity to grow, to develop, to change as time passes and they move toward old age and the grave.

Oskar's refusal to grow, to measure his shadow by that of older persons or to compete for the things they desire, is the assertion of his individuality against a world which, misconstruing him, would force him into an alien pattern. He is pleased when he discovers his ability to shatter glass with his voice, a talent which becomes not only a means of destruction, the venting of his hostility and outrage, but also an art whereby he can cut in the window of a jewelry shop a neat hole through which Bronski, upon whom he heaps the filial affection he does not feel for his more mundane father, can snatch an expensive necklace for his beloved Agnes.

The later period of Oskar's recorded existence is crammed with outlandish events. His mother witnesses a revolting scene of eels being extracted from the head of a dead horse submerged in water, perversely forces a diet of fish upon herself, and dies. Oskar becomes fascinated with the hieroglyphic scars on the massive back of Herbert Truczinski, his friend, but Herbert, who works as a Maritime Museum attendant, grows enamoured of a ship's wooden figurehead called Niobe and, in an attempt to make love to her, is instead impaled to her by a double-edged ship's axe. Jan Bronski is executed

after an S.S. raid on the Polish post office where he has gone with Oskar, and Oskar is overwhelmed with guilt for the death of his mother and the man who was probably his father. In one of the most superbly preposterous seduction scenes in literature, Oskar becomes the lover of Herbert's youngest sister, Maria, and fathers her child. Maria then marries Alfred Matzerath, and Oskar turns to the ampler comforts (he is as prodigious sexually as he is diminutive physically) of Lina Greff, whose latent homosexual husband shortly, upon receiving a summons to appear in court on a morals charge, commits a fantastically elaborate and grotesque suicide. Oskar then goes on to join Bebra's troupe of entertainers and becomes the lover of the timeless Roswitha Raguna. When the Russians invade Danzig, Matzerath, to conceal his affiliations, swallows the Nazi party pin which Oskar has shoved into his hand and dies. Again Oskar feels responsible for the death of a parent. Before long, against his will, he begins to grow and to develop a hump. His postwar life takes him to West Germany, where he is at various times a black marketeer, a model, and a nightclub entertainer, and eventually to Düsseldorf, where a destiny not his own catches up with him in the guise of the accusation that he has killed Sister Dorothea, the woman in the room next to his. The testimony of Vittlar, which is meant to save Oskar, although Vittlar has earlier thought him guilty, ironically damns him, and Oskar submits to being judged insane and atoning for a guilt not strictly his, even though he is finally to his own sense guilty by implication, an emblem of the modern world even in his isolation from it.

The Tin Drum is a surreal-picaresque, a mock-epic chronicle of Western Europe's (and by extension the world's) twentieth century madness, a sardonic, shocking, hilarious reflection of a world in upheaval, a world in which values become inverted and indistinguishable, in which the tragic is at the same time the

comic, and the agonizing the ludicrous. *The Tin Drum* violates all modes of decorum—its chaos is the outward appearance and inner principle of the world it seeks to capture—but the imaginative

vitality of its creation is somehow its own decorum, and of itself an affirmation in the face of the dissolution which it postulates.

THE TRAGIC MUSE

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry James (1843-1916)

Type of plot: Social narrative

Time of plot: The 1880's

Locale: Paris and England

First published: 1890

Principal characters:

NICHOLAS DORMER, a young politician and amateur painter

LADY AGNES DORMER, his mother

GRACE DORMER and

BIDDY DORMER, his sisters

JULIA DALLOW, their cousin

PETER SHERRINGHAM, her brother

GABRIEL NASH, a friend of Nicholas

MIRIAM ROTH, an actress

MRS. ROTH, her mother

BASIL DASHWOOD, an actor

Critique:

The Tragic Muse of the title is an actress, a portrait of her, and also an idea in the minds of the three central characters, each of whom represents some aspect of the conflict between ordinary life and the demands of art. This theme predominates over the intrinsic interest of the characters themselves, with the result that the novel reveals more of James's preoccupations at a certain stage of his career than of his skill as a novelist. It was written at the beginning of a period in his life when he concentrated almost exclusively on the drama and attempted for five frustrating years to achieve success on the London stage. Although he considered the drama the supreme literary form, he deplored the conditions of theatrical production, and this dilemma forms the subject of a considerable proportion of the conversation in the novel. The plot, developed in terms of the decisions each of the central characters makes about the sacrifices necessary for art, lacks the subtlety and

complexity of the great novels of James's later years, when he turned from the drama to perfect the dramatic method in the novel.

The Story:

Nicholas Dormer, a handsome young bachelor politician and amateur portrait painter, was vacationing in Paris with his formidable mother, Lady Agnes, the impoverished widow of a Liberal politician, and his two younger sisters, spinsterish Grace and lively, lovable Biddy. At an art exhibition Nick met an old Oxford friend, Gabriel Nash, an aesthete and dilettante but sufficiently a gentleman to be introduced to the ladies. Another visitor in Paris was the Dormers' cousin, Julia Dallow, a rich and politically-minded young widow, whose brother, Peter Sherringham, was at the British Embassy there. Nick's fondness for Julia, her devotion to his political career, Biddy's friendship with Julia and unrequited

affection for Peter, and Peter and Nick's congeniality united the family group with particularly close ties.

While they were together in Paris, they heard that the member of Parliament for the constituency where Julia's estate and influence lay had died suddenly. Guaranteeing her financial as well as political support, Julia wanted Nick to stand for election. This family solidarity was threatened unobtrusively by Gabriel Nash's introduction of Mrs. Rooth and Miriam, typical Jamesian characters: the widow of limited means and vague claims to aristocratic connections in England, and the beautiful daughter who has been brought up in a succession of Continental pensions where living is cheap, superficially cultivated, and multi-lingual but without any real education or training. To promote Miriam's aspirations toward the stage, Nash had arranged an audition with a notable retired French actress whom Peter Sherringham knew through his passionate interest in the theater. Peter, also invited to the audition, persuaded Nick to join him and suggested that Nick should paint Miriam as the Tragic Muse. Although the audition was a fiasco, Peter was sufficiently intrigued to invite the Rooths to a party at his house. There Miriam recited again, met the ladies of the family, and made a bad impression on all but Biddy. Julia, disgusted both with Miriam and with what she considered the frivolousness of Nash, returned to England to organize the election campaign, and the Dormers followed soon after. Peter found himself increasingly involved with Miriam, to the extent of offering to pay for private lessons with the old French actress. At first he assumed that his interest was in Miriam's potential as an actress, but he eventually realized that he had been in love with her all along. Thus the scene was set in Paris for a drama which reaches its climax in London.

At Harsh, Julia's principal estate, where Nick had just won the election, he proposed to Julia and was accepted. To

their mutual happiness there was added an undercurrent of misunderstanding, his assurance that he would give up his painting, her incomprehension of what this would mean to him, and her refusal to set their wedding date. When Nick next went to see his father's old friend and political ally, Mr. Carteret, he learned that his prospects of being the rich old bachelor's heir depended on his marriage to Julia.

Peter Sherringham, meanwhile, returning to Paris after leave in London, found that Miriam had acquired another patron, an English actor named Basil Dashwood. Peter urged her to give up her theatrical ambition for a greater role as wife of a rising diplomat, but she said that she would accept him only as the husband of an actress. In London the engaged couple faced similar difficulties as Julia planned to spend the Parliamentary recess on a round of strategic country-house visits, while Nick preferred to use his leisure painting in his studio. With the wedding date set at last, they separated and Nick retired to his studio, where his first visitor was Gabriel Nash, whom he had not seen since their meeting in Paris. Nash told him that Miriam had arrived in London after her first success in Paris and wanted Nick to make good his promise to paint her as the Tragic Muse. When Nash brought her to the studio the next day, Nick was excited about her possibilities as a portrait subject. Beginning to paint immediately, he waited until later that night to write Julia about it. Julia failed to get the letter because she returned to London unexpectedly, called to surprise Nick, and was so stunned to find him with an actress as a sitter that she left without a word and was not at home when he called that evening. When he finally saw her late at night, she broke the engagement on the grounds that his preference for the artistic life would never be compatible with her own interest in politics.

The next day Julia left for the Continent. Stopping in Paris to see her brother

and tell him what had happened, she also urged him to marry Biddy. Though he had determined to forget the actress, Julia's account made him more eager to see Miriam than Biddy. He found a pretext for a journey to London, where he went straight to Miriam's rented villa. Not finding her at home, he then went to Nick's studio and there found Biddy alone. Discussing the break between Nick and Julia with Biddy, who was loyal to and sympathetic with both her brother and her friend, Peter failed to understand either of them; but seeing the portrait of Miriam gave a deeper understanding of the actress' beauty and of Nick's talent. Peter gave Biddy a momentary thrill by inviting her to the theater that night to see Miriam act. During the rest of his visit he spent most of his time with the coterie of Miriam's friends who met at her house to discuss the theater.

Nick was away from London on a visit to dying Mr. Carteret, to whom he confessed not only that the engagement was broken but also that he had just written a letter to his constituency resigning his seat in Parliament. Difficult as it was to disappoint his father's old friend, who had treated him like a son, Nick found it even harder to tell his mother, who believed that the sacrifice of his political career had betrayed his father's memory, while the dual sacrifice of Mr. Carteret's and Julia's fortunes had betrayed his sisters and herself. Only Biddy remained loyal to Nick; she spent more and more time at his studio, where she had taken up sculpture.

During Peter's prolonged stay in London, the central characters revolved around one another in a tantalizing minuet: Nick saw his devoted younger sister tortured by the knowledge that Peter was in love with Miriam, and Peter was tortured by Gabriel Nash's telling him that Miriam was in love with Nick. For the third time Nash, the detached observer of life, precipitated a crisis in the lives of others. Peter tried to maintain his equilibrium by calling on Lady Agnes and ac-

cepting an invitation to dinner, but he cancelled it at the last minute when he learned that the first night of Miriam's new play had been scheduled. Her superb performance increased his passion so much that he tried again to persuade her to give up the stage to marry him, but she repeated her original terms. Defeated by her determination, Peter accepted promotion to a higher post in some remote country and withdrew.

The next year, while Miriam established herself rapidly as a success on the London stage, Nick continued to paint her, though with no interest in her except as a subject. His own artistic career was not successful and he was worried about debts. Biddy refused a rich suitor. Julia finally came back to England accompanied by rumors of romance with a leading politician. At this depressing period, Gabriel Nash reappeared and agreed to sit for a portrait, but after one sitting disappeared again. His encouragement of Nick's artistic bent had a lasting influence, but the complications he evoked began to disappear when he did. Julia made overtures through Biddy with the suggestion that she wanted to sit for a portrait. While Nick and Biddy were discussing this proposal, they were surprised by the arrival at the studio of Miriam and her new husband, Basil Dashwood, both excited about Miriam's opening that night as Juliet. Although the house was sold out, they managed to get a seat for Biddy as well as Nick. At the theater they saw Peter Sherringham, who had returned from abroad in time for the first night but too late to declare again his love for Miriam, who had married three days before.

With the Tragic Muse established as a public figure, Nicholas Dormer and Peter Sherringham brought their private affairs to a swift and easy conclusion. Peter arranged for an extension of his leave in order to return to his post with Biddy as his wife. Nick painted a portrait of Julia which attracted the favorable attention of critics at a private view. There were also

rumors that Julia's other suitor was worried about her. Whether Nick would ever achieve success in the career for which he had sacrificed heavily, as Mir-

iam and Peter achieved it in theirs, remained a provocative question for the future.

THE TRAGIC SENSE OF LIFE IN MEN AND IN PEOPLES

Type of work: Philosophy

Author: Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo (1864-1936)

First published: 1913

One of the major original thinkers of the twentieth century, Unamuno defies clear-cut classification; *The Tragic Sense of Life in Man and in Peoples* (*Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*), for example, is a remarkably unusual philosophical treatise because in it Unamuno passionately rejected formal logic and accepted paradox and contradiction as essential to his view of life. Even his style, a rhetoric of passion and intensity, is unlike the calm, detached style of the ordinary philosopher; but it is a fundamental component of his thought. A Roman Catholic, he discarded the Church's view of God; a Spaniard, he denounced both the Monarchy and the Falangists; a philosopher, he rejected any and all systems. He reflects the movement that was to grow from Husserl into "Christian Existentialism," but he preserves the Romantic duality of body and spirit in man and refuses to discard the mystery of the Catholic Eucharist. He is, in short, an outspoken exponent of "confusionism," the philosophical approach to the human predicament that he felt most accurately described man.

Looking back to his own spiritual crisis, he begins *The Tragic Sense of Life* by stating that the only real man is the affective or feeling man, the man of flesh and bone, not the abstract man of rationalistic philosophers. This concrete man has only one problem: the longing never to die. Because this problem is irrational, all reason builds upon irrationalities. What intensifies the problem is that man wants to be only himself; he wants to prolong his actual flesh-and-bone existence

indefinitely. But his reason tells him that this is impossible, despite his feelings. Thus he is caught in a deadlock between reason which tells him that all things must die and passion which yearns to live forever. The deadlock is tragic because it has no solution. Unamuno says that disease is anything that disturbs unity; therefore, consciousness itself is a disease, the particular disease that causes man to find some means of self-preservation and self-perpetuation. These two "instincts"—to survive and to love—are the foundations of the individual and of society. Through love the imagination creates an ideal world in which it perpetuates itself; this is the realm of knowledge. Man seeks knowledge only to ascertain whether he is really going to die, because after he becomes conscious of himself he does not want to die utterly. This search for knowledge of immortality, the tragic sense of life, is the starting point of philosophy, the alteration of the Cartesian *cogito* into *sum ergo cogito*.

Unamuno points out that all religions have sprung from cults of immortality and that man alone of the animals knows himself distinct from nature. He further points out that the thirst for immortality always stifles the life that passes and never abides. But the affirmation of immortality is based only upon the insecure foundation of the desire for immortality; thus man cannot escape his tragic fate. Reason, however, attacks this blind faith, and faith which does not feel itself secure has to come to terms with it even though reason and faith can never reach compromise. Each seeks nothing less than the

complete destruction of the other. The only religion to bridge these contradictory states and thus bring them into any kind of harmony is Catholicism, because only Catholicism is a system of contradictions in which the greatest danger is to attempt to rationalize the paradoxical solution, symbolized by the Eucharist. Rationalism in any of its forms—materialism, pragmatism, agnosticism, empiricism, pantheism, or science—cannot explain the soul; it deals with categories that are dead things but is unable to deal with living things that never remain the same for two moments. Man, however, is a prisoner of logic without which he could not think; thus he tends always to make logic subservient to his desire for immortality. This need for logic or reason is always a stumbling block of faith, always ending in skepticism, an anti-vitalism. Thus the longing never to die finds no consolation in reason; still, man cannot exclude reason because to do so would be to reduce him to an irrational animal. The only thing left is to accept both faith and reason as an association of continual struggle—faith to absorb the world into the self and overcome time and space, reason to absorb the self into the world and perpetuate the self in love. Through this inner struggle man creates God, for to believe in God is to long for His existence and to act as if He existed.

Having fully stated the problem of human existence, Unamuno turns from analysis to synthesis after carefully warning that he has no intention to construct a system. He begins with the Pauline triad, faith, hope and charity. Love personalizes its object; in discovering the suffering in the self and in the Universe, it personalizes the Universe; that is, it creates God. Faith is the longing for the existence of God, a movement toward a practical truth that lets man live, and the creative power in man insofar as man creates God through love. Hope is love directed toward the future and growing form the disillusionment of the past; the fundamental hope is, of course, the hope

for eternal life. Because spirit cannot exist without matter and because matter always limits spirit, man's inherent state is to suffer. Charity is the impulse to liberate the self, other men, and God from matter, from suffering. In the passionate longing not to die, man's instinct of living and instinct of knowing thus come into bitter conflict, all the more so because both absolute certainty (faith) and absolute doubt (reason) are denied to him. Spiritual love is the result of pity, the awareness of suffering in others caused by the death of carnal love; it cannot, for this reason, exist apart from suffering. The personalization of a suffering universe is the highest view of God attainable by man, the Christian Incarnation. This view is necessarily collective and social, although originally it was the subjectivity of consciousness projected exteriorly. But reason attempts to define this God created by faith, hope, and charity and in doing so attempts to kill Him.

This deadlock between faith and reason reaches its climax in the *apocatastasis*. The essence of religion is the problem of eternal life. Man wishes to possess God, not to have God possess him because he does not want to lose self-consciousness which a complete union with God implies. What man longs for is an eternal prolongation of this life; thus any hypothesis of a heaven without change or without suffering must be false because life necessarily posits change and suffering. Eternity must be unending suffering, unceasing faith, hope, and charity. But the New Testament speaks of the *apocatastasis*, God's coming to be all in all, and of the *anacephaleosis*, the gathering together of all things in Christ. Thus not only must salvation be collective, it must also be the fusion of all things into one person. This is the supreme religious sacrifice, the climax of the human tragedy and the very thing that man most desires to see ultimately lost. Man wants an eternal purgatory, an ascent that never reaches the climax, an eternity of hope not of salvation.

Unamuno is not satisfied with speculations upon a mythology of the beyond; he is mainly concerned with life here and now. His system of ethics, however, is ultimately associated to his theology. Good is anything that helps man to satisfy his longing for immortality; bad, anything that makes him satisfied with a temporal state. The purpose of ethics is to act in such a way that each man makes himself irreplaceable so that no one can fill his place when he dies. A good life is a vital

one centered in action for others; thus the *apocatastasis* is the supreme rule of ethics. Such a life is symbolized for Unamuno by Don Quixote, who represents the vitalist whose faith is based on uncertainty, and by Sancho, the rationalist who doubts his own reason. In these two literary figures he sees the epitome of the tragic sense of life, the desperate, unending struggle between faith and reason.

TRAVELS TO THE INTERIOR DISTRICTS OF AFRICA

Type of work: Journal of exploration

Author: Mungo Park (1771-1806)

First published: 1799

Principal personages:

MUNGO PARK, an agent of the African Society, the narrator

JOHNSON, a Mandingo native, ex-slave, Park's servant-interpreter

DEMBA, a "Serawoolly" native, a slave, Park's servant

ALI, a Moorish chief

MANSONG, King of Bambarra

KARFA, a slave trader who rescues Park

DR. JOHN LAIDLEY, trader at Pisanian, Gambia, Park's agent

The journal of Mungo Park's eighteen months' struggle in West Africa to find the source of the Niger and visit Timbuktu has become a classic of English exploration literature for three reasons: this is an adventure story of life and death; it deals with the narrow escape of a remarkable individual; and the author describes his terrible experiences in classical prose which is still a pleasure to read. Mungo Park's character can be seen in the story he tells; he was twenty-five years old, qualified at Edinburgh University as a surgeon, experienced in tropical conditions in the East Indies. Eight years after his return from West Africa to Scotland he made another attempt to explore the Niger from its delta to its source. He was ambushed and killed at Busa in 1806, some four hundred miles from his starting point.

As for the simple yet graphic style, here is this account of his situation when, having reached the Niger, he was unable

after eight months of traveling to make the remaining fourteen days' journey to Timbuktu: "Worn down by sickness, exhausted with hunger and fatigue, half-naked, and without any article of value by which I might procure provisions, clothes, or lodging, I began to reflect seriously on my position." Park then turned westward and began the long walk back to the coast, arriving there nearly a year later. The record he published encouraged the abolition of the slave trade, and his second book, *The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa in 1805*, led eventually to the occupation of Nigeria.

The assignment for which Park volunteered was in some ways ill-considered. In the midst of the French Revolutionary Wars the African Society (a missionary-trade-scientific association) decided to use the disruption of French trade in coastal West Africa to attempt to lay hands on the key to that trade, the interior routes by which slaves, ivory, and

gold came down to the coast. The society had already lost one explorer a year or two before Park set out, and one of his instructions was to find what happened to his predecessor. The disruption of trade rippled back into the interior and exacerbated tribal warfare in which Park was caught up; furthermore, he was a devout "Nazarini" or Christian in territory which, though organized into African kingdoms, was at the mercy of Moorish bandits, traders, and officials, all fanatic Muslims; he ran a constant risk of their enslaving him. Also, Park traveled alone, his supplies simply the trade goods which immediately excited the greed of the Moors and brought him to destitution; only the kindness of slaves and women, the enlightened self-interest of slave-traders, and the merciful intervention of an African king brought Park back alive.

Park's motives in exploring West Africa show that curious blend of commercial and Christian drives which was to open up Africa and much of the rest of the world as the British Empire in the century inaugurated by Park's journeys; his instructions were to clear up the rumors that the Niger went north, then west, rising somewhere not far from the Gambia mouth, a well-established trading center, and especially to visit Timbuktu and "Houssa" (name for the Hausa of Northern Nigeria) which were the great entrepôts or bottlenecks for all the trade between the northern coast of Africa and the thickly settled West African hinterland and coast. His plan was to strike east from the Gambia mouth until he hit the Niger and could confirm its eastward flow at that point.

Park arrived at the Gambia trading post of Pisania on July 5, 1795, and stayed four months with his agent there, the trader Dr. John Laidley; in that time he caught the coastal or acclimatizing fever which he never lost, learned the Mandingo language, and wrote the first of the chapters of observations scientific, economic, religious, botanical, and social which occur in his journal whenever he is

detained for some time in an area. The Africans, he found, were well organized in kingdoms, towns, and villages, with a court, civil service, and judicature working generally efficiently; Park attended several law moots or "palavers" and was intrigued to find African advocates very like their counterparts in Britain. At each town it was necessary for him to pay his respects to the king's representative, the head man (sometimes called "alkaid" and sometimes "dooty"), and also the custom duties and tolls extracted from all traders in spite of his protests that he was no trader. His mission aroused distrust, expressed by King Mansong of Bambarra, who rescued Park when the traveler was destitute but prohibited further passage east, and who, "when he was told that I had come from a great distance, and through many dangers, to behold the Joliba river [Niger], naturally inquired if there were no rivers in my own country, and whether one river was not like another."

The principal trade of the whole area Park covered was in slaves, but Park was careful to point out that although three-quarters of the African population was enslaved to the other quarter, the capture and selling of slaves was largely enforced by the Moors, the Africans being bound by their laws not to dispose of their slaves except under unusual conditions. Slaves were a kind of capital in the vital trade in salt without which the teeming millions of West Africa could not live; had there been no outlet on the coast for the slaves it is possible that they might have remained within the area except for the demand from the North African Moslem slave markets. But the European trade also came to consist of slaves. Its currency was iron bars at ten to one pound sterling, a slave being worth about one hundred and fifty bars. Park made his escape back to the coast by going along with a "coffle" of slaves, and paid his rescuer in goods to the value of two slaves; in the interior he had been given five thousand cowrie shells by King Mansong. Park's

attitude to the Europeans' and Americans' trading liquor and firearms for slaves is not as righteously indignant as we might expect; he pleads for its abolition on the grounds of human suffering and as a blow against the vicious Moors.

Mungo Park set out on December 3, 1795, with two servants provided by Dr. Laidley, which Park was later able to cash, a letter of credit to a slaver in the interior, an umbrella, firearms, compass, clothing, some trade goods, and an Arabic grammar. He rode a horse which lasted him about eight hundred miles, and the servants rode asses. One servant was named Johnson, an elderly Mandingo who could help Park with the language because he had been enslaved on Jamaica as a youth, freed, gone to England, and found his way back to Gambia; the other was a slave boy, Demba, who was promised his liberty when the party returned.

The principal cause of Park's failure to reach Timbuktu was his decision to try to avoid the tribal wars which were hampering his movement eastward; he turned northeast into semi-desert country. Close to the place, as he learned, where Major Houghton, the previous agent of the African Society, was stripped, starved, and abandoned by the nomadic Moors of that kingdom, Park was himself seized, and imprisoned for a month. Demba was enslaved by the chieftain, Ali. Park sent Johnson back to Gambia with copies of his papers; he never heard of him or Demba again. He himself made his escape, nearly died of thirst, was robbed by the Moors, and finally helped as far as the Niger by friendly Africans. There at King Mansong's capital of

Segou he was astonished at its resemblance to London on the Thames; "The view of this extensive city . . . formed altogether a prospect of civilization and magnificence which I little expected to find in the bosom of Africa." If he was unable to reach the fabled and more magnificent city of Timbuktu, he was at least able to confirm reports of the wealth of the hinterland.

Park managed to get a few miles further down the Niger past Sansanding, but by that time his horse was exhausted. He collected what information he could and turned back for the far more difficult return journey on July 30, 1796, in the midst of the rainy season. He attempted to follow but abandoned the Niger upstream at Bamako, and struck east toward Gambia, more than five hundred miles away. He fell in with a slave dealer named Karfa on September 16 and thereafter was protected by the trader until Karfa's coffle reached Pisanian, Park's starting place. There he was reunited with Dr. Laidley on June 12, 1797. During his association with Karfa Park learned a great deal about the Mandingos, information he recorded in detail in Chapters XX through XXIV in his journal. But he gained more valuable information when he traveled to the coast with the slave coffle and then boarded a slaver for the West Indies as the quickest way of getting home. It was this first-hand experience of the slave trade which made Park's *Journal* one of the prime pieces of evidence in the hands of the Abolitionists, who within twelve years achieved their objective by ending the slave trade in British territories.

THE TREATISES OF CICERO

Type of work: Prose essays

Author: Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.)

First transcribed: *On Invention*, 84 B.C.; *On the Orator*, 55 B.C.; *The Divisions of Oratory*, 54 B.C.; *On the Republic*, 54-51 B.C.; *On the Best Kind of Orator*, 52 B.C.; *On Law*, 52 and 46-45 B.C.; *Brutus*, 46 B.C.; *The Orator*, 46 B.C.; *Paradoxes of the Stoics*, 46 B.C.; *Academics*, 45 B.C.; *On the Ends of Good and Evil*, 45 B.C.; *Tusculan Disputations*, 45 B.C.; *On the Nature of the Gods*, 45 B.C.; *On Divination*, 45 B.C.; *On Fate*, 45 B.C.;

Although scarcely read today, until the last century Cicero was one of the most widely admired writers of classical antiquity. His reputation was especially high in the period from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and it must be recognized that his writings have had an incalculable influence on the development of modern education and ethical and political thought, an influence so pervasive that it is still active even on those millions who have never read a word of Cicero. The writings of Cicero, the "typical" Roman, fall into three broad categories, each with its own interest and importance: the orations, magnificent and forceful speeches Cicero delivered in the various law courts and political assemblies of the late Roman republic; the epistles, a large body of personal letters written to close friends and associates, full of historical and biographical information, and masterly in style; and the treatises, a group of essays and studies.

The treatises themselves fall into five main categories: works on speculative philosophy, pagan theology, the art of rhetoric, politics, and morals.

With the exception of the five books of the *Tusculan Disputations*, perhaps the least interesting of the treatises to the general reader are those concerned with speculative philosophy and pagan theology. These works, like most of Cicero, rely heavily on Greek antecedents. The theological works include *On the Nature of the Gods*, Cicero's major work in this category, which explains the views on the subject of the Epicurean, Academic, and Stoic philosophers. The author's proof in this treatise of a benign providence is much admired. *On Divination* and *On Fate* are supplements to *On the Nature of the Gods*. In the first, Cicero discusses the kinds of divination practiced by the Romans. In the fragmentary *On Fate* the subject is the problem of free will.

Earliest among the speculative works is the *Academics*, an only partially surviving study of the philosophy of the Athenian Academy. *On the Greatest Degrees of Good and Evil*, in five books, is a consideration of the basic ethical problem: the determination of what is the chief good and ultimate aim of life. In this treatise is found a survey of the various ethical doctrines influential in Rome; Cicero decides for the philosophy of the Academy, whose teachings are fit for aristocrats, leaders, and scholars. The five books of the *Tusculan Disputations*, a treatise much read in later times, are concerned with the essential constituents of happiness: contempt of death, endurance of affliction, alleviation of grief and other disturbing emotions, and the idea that virtuous living is in itself the happy life.

Among the rhetorical treatises is found Cicero's earliest prose work, *On Invention*. This book was to have been a complete and systematic survey in Latin of the best of Greek rhetorical instruction. Cicero never completed it. This work is of little interest except to the scholar. The same may be said of three other works in this category: *The Divisions of Oratory*, a catechism of rhetorical practice in dialogue form and written for the instruction of his young son; *On the Best Kind of Orator*, a surviving introduction to a now lost translation of certain orations of the great Greek speakers of the fourth century B.C., Demosthenes and Aeschines; and the *Topica*, an abstract of the *Topics* (methods of drawing conclusions) of Aristotle.

Three other of the rhetorical works, however, are of more general interest: *Brutus*, *The Orator*, and *On the Orator*. *Brutus* is a literary history, in dialogue form, of Greek and Roman eloquence. Cicero includes in this work an interesting discussion of his own rhetorical development and discusses important problems of style. *The Orator* is a detailed

treatise written in the form of an open letter to one of Cicero's friends. Its main concern is to describe the ideal orator and his techniques: the determination of the proper level of style, ornamentation, proper pronunciation, word arrangement, diction, rhythm, and the like.

On the Orator is commonly considered to be Cicero's finest rhetorical work. It is written in the form of a dialogue between various minor personages and one Antonius and a Crassus, two Roman orators and lawyers that Cicero admired in his youth. The subject of the dialogue is a question: "How can the perfect orator and statesman be produced?" This problem had two sides; one, what are the important things an orator should learn, and two, what kind of man should the orator be, considering that he is to govern the state? In the first of the work's three books, the various characters discuss the premise that the orator must be given a full and sound education in matters other than rhetoric. One of the main characters, Crassus, insists that the orator should have a wide background and that he should always know what he is talking about. But the other, Antonius, disagrees and claims that the ability to speak skillfully is enough. A skillful orator, he says, can speak effectively about a thing whether he understands it or not. In the second book Antonius expounds selection of materials, organization of materials, and memory; and in the third book Crassus speaks of style and delivery. The dialogue ignores technical, school room considerations (for those, see *The Orator*) in order to concentrate on practical problems.

The *Brutus*, *The Orator*, and *On the Orator* were all regarded as important books during and after the Renaissance rediscovery of the classics, and all had much to do with the development of modern prose style.

One of Cicero's two political treatises, *On the Republic*, is thought by many to be his best work. It is more a philosophical than a practical essay, and while it

owes something to Plato's *Republic*, it owes more to Cicero himself. This treatise was one of the relatively few Ciceronian texts known in the Middle Ages; even at that, however, it was known only by a single long fragment from the conclusion, the so-called *Dream of Scipio* to which was attached the influential commentary of Macrobius. This fragment denies the validity of transitory concerns even for the statesman, and thus it easily fit into the medieval Christian view of things. It was not until 1820, when a large portion of the complete treatise was discovered in the Vatican Library, that readers were able to achieve a good idea of the whole work. In *On the Republic*, Cicero defines the state, discusses the best form of the state (he finds the republican Roman state to be an ideal example), summarizes Roman history in order to illustrate the growth of the Roman constitution, and concludes that practical statesmanship is more important than the pursuit of philosophic studies. Both the state and the individual must be just, Cicero says, and justice is based on Natural Law. The citizen, however, must be guided by the interests of the commonwealth.

On Law, the second of Cicero's political works, was published as a kind of sequel to *On the Republic*. It explains the laws of Cicero's ideal commonwealth. Only the first three books of this treatise survive.

Finally, in the three surviving moral treatises are the works of Cicero that have been most popular with the general public: *On Duty*; *Laelius*, on Friendship; and most attractive of all, *Cato the Elder*, on Old Age. The characters of the brief dialogue of *Cato* (the fictive time of which is 150 B.C.) are the stern Cato the Elder, who is eighty-four; Scipio Africanus the younger, who is thirty-five; and Laelius, who is thirty-six. In an urbane and witty style, Cicero praises old age and refutes the usual complaints about that condition. The companion piece to this treatise is the dialogue, *On Friend-*

ship. The fictive date of this piece is 129 B.C., and the speakers are Laelius and his two sons-in-law. The dialogue takes place shortly after the sudden death of the friend of Laelius, the Scipio of the previous dialogue. In this work Cicero discusses the nature, obligations, problems and some examples of friendship.

Much less charming, considerably more lengthy, and less popular than the above two works, the three books of *On Duty* nevertheless have been a powerful influence on Western culture. This, Cicero's last treatise, was written only a year before his death, and it contains the fruit of a lifetime's experience and observation among the most important affairs and men of the Roman world. Right conduct is the subject of this work, which was written for Cicero's grown son, who was just finishing his schooling and who was about to set out in the world. The influence of this work, especially in the last five hundred years, when it was read by

thousands of men young and old as an ethical handbook, is difficult to overestimate. In it is found the whole ethic of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance gentleman, aristocrat, and leader. The first book considers ethical good and greatness of spirit in terms of the four cardinal virtues, wisdom, courage, justice, and self-control. Book Two considers the practical, pragmatic bases of the relationships of men, and Book Three is concerned with the problems that arise when the virtues of Book One and the practical necessities of Book Two come into conflict. This treatise was hastily written, and it drags and is confused here and there; nevertheless, it remains an impressive and realistic study of how a man should act, and it is as rewarding to read today as it ever was, if only to help us understand, for example, the ethical set of the heroes who walked in Shakespeare's dramatic world, or the point of view from which Montaigne spoke in his essays.

THE TREE OF MAN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Patrick White (1912-)

Time: First half of the twentieth century

Locale: New South Wales

First published: 1955

Principal characters:

STAN PARKER, an Australian pioneer

AMY, his wife

RAY, their son

THELMA, their daughter

MRS. O'DOWD, a hearty Irishwoman

MR. O'DOWD, a black Irish drunkard

DOLL QUIGLEY, a neighbor

BUB, her feeble-minded brother

MRS. GAGE, the postmistress of the settlement

Some novels owe their scope and power to neither plot nor characterization, but to the slow accumulation of details—"the minute particulars of mankind"—which gradually take on shape and substance so as to convince us that the pattern of experience they present is the authentic stuff of life. *The Tree of Man* is such a work of fiction.

When this novel first appeared, some reviewers were quick to point out similarities they had detected between Patrick White's story of an Australian homesteader and the writing of D. H. Lawrence. It is true that the Lawrence who wrote *Kangaroo* and collaborated on *The Boy in the Bush* has illustrative value for the contemporary Australian novelist,

and it is also true that White is somewhat like Lawrence in that he shares the older writer's extraordinarily vivid apprehension of nature and a nonintellectual response to experience. On the other hand, he is almost completely lacking in Lawrence's visionary sense and the tortured pantheism which in Lawrence's fiction accounts for his absorption in fertility rituals and his self-conscious primitivism of thought and feeling. Rather, the literary kinship of *The Tree of Man* is with quite a different kind of story, one in which the wilderness setting makes for a picture of man face to face with nature as well as life.

The situation is the same as that existing in certain novels of the American frontier, which the Australian still resembles in many ways, and this is the material to which we ordinarily apply the term epic because it encloses something of the same spirit we find in stories dealing with the founding of ancient races. It might be called the epic of the settlement as opposed to the epic of discovery. The basic pattern is always the same, almost biblical in its simplicity: the story of man alone in the wilderness, the building of a homestead, the coming of the woman, the labor to subdue the wild land, the growth of a family, the development of a community, and lastly the contrast between patriarchal beginnings and the decline of later generations into materialism. Three concepts of man are usually presented in the course of the narrative: Man against Nature, Man and the Family, Man in Society.

The Tree of Man opens with the first of these stages in a primitive setting of the Australian bush, with the spectacle of a man, a horse, and a dog, and the sound of an axe blade against a hairy tree breaking the silence of the wilderness. The man is Stan Parker. Son of a genteel, ambitious mother and a roaring blacksmith, he has knocked about and tried his hand at all sorts of occupations from driving sheep to clerking in a store before deciding to strike out into the back country of

New South Wales and to settle down on some uncleared land his dead father had left him. As the months pass he cuts down the trees, clears his fields, builds a shack of rough slab walls. The time is about the turn of the century. One day he drives down into the township of Yuruga. When he returns, a woman is riding beside him. Mrs. Stan Parker, born Amy Figgins, has married Stan after it was understood that none of the Botts girls would have the blacksmith's son living in a shack in the hills. After the wedding ceremony in the rickety church at Yuruga her friends gave her a Bible, a blouse almost as good as new, and a little silver nutmeg grater. Then the young couple drove off to make their own future in the bush.

Stan is slow and inarticulate and usually easy in his ways, and Amy has little more imagination than he. But she has deep reserves of strength and passion that Stan will never be able to plumb, so that at different periods of their marriage this lack of communication and understanding is to become a barrier between them. Time passes; they work; their dairy farm prospers in a modest way. As White puts it, they live in a world where the pursuits and purposes of living meant more than the mere names of things. Certainly Stan never questioned the purpose of living and Amy only rarely. Sometimes, however, their lives are touched with strangeness and wonder, as Stan's is when he sees an old drowned man, upside down in a tree, during the great floods at Wullunga, or when he carries a beautiful young girl from a burning house. Amy has her own secret too, the moment of fleshly weakness which leads to her strange infidelity with a married traveling salesman named Leo.

Neighbors settle nearby. The little community gets a post office and a store and is known as Durilgai, after an aboriginal word meaning fruitful. Floods, fires, war, and droughts pass over the Parkers but fail to overwhelm them. A son named Ray is born and a daughter called

Thelma. Ray turns out badly. He has his father's youthful restlessness without Stan's moral strength, and he grows up to become a petty criminal, marry a girl whose life he almost ruins, father a son of his own, and die by violence. Thelma, snobbishly wanting to know only the right people, goes away to the city to work and ends by marrying her dull but wealthy solicitor employer. All this is told in a leisurely, almost rambling fashion. On the surface very little happens to justify the length of the novel and attention to detail in its pages. Yet Stan and Amy Parker live and at last are clearly shown to us through the minutiae of their daily lives. Nowhere is the author's skill better revealed than in the subtle means by which he shows the inner desires and compulsions of people who outwardly are so stolid in personality and limited in experience. Through the years Stan and his wife come to a discovery of self and of each other as awkward as it is touching.

The novel lives also in its minor characters. The O'Dowds, for example are unforgettable. Mrs. O'Dowd was a cheerful sinner whom life possessed untidily but completely, happy in her common-law marriage with a black Irishman who threw his empty bottles into the dooryard and in his drunken frenzies chased her with a meat cleaver. She insists that she herself does not drink, though it is appar-

ent that she does. She dies as she has lived, raffishly herself and refusing to see a priest, claiming that she is not afraid to talk for herself. There are also the Quigleys, Doll, ugly and tender, and her half-witted brother Bub, whom she kills in a mercy slaying, and Mrs. Gage, the harried post mistress whose husband hangs himself. These and others fill in the background of the novel and give the book its powerful, urgent sense of felt experience.

The Tree of Man makes no apologies or evasions. This, the writer seems to say, is the inescapable condition of man, lonely, exhilarating, sad; take it or leave it. But in spite of its fidelity to everyday truth, with its record of brief joys and small disappointments, the novel is never depressing. Its final impression of mingled simplicity and grandeur can be accounted for by the compassionate handling of its theme. The late John Peale Bishop once wrote that the most serious demand a novelist can make on his art is to search for the answer to a single question: how is man to conduct himself to keep his soul from growing sick and dying? Because he dares to make this demand, Patrick White has achieved much in this novel which tells of man's seeking and finding, always with patient strength and simplicity.

TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Henry Miller (1891-)

Time: The 1920's

Locale: New York City

First published: 1939

Principal personages:

HENRY MILLER, the narrator and principal character

HIS WIFE,

HIS FATHER,

HIS MOTHER, and

HIS SISTER, all unnamed

GENE, Miller's cousin

AUNT CAROLINE, Gene's mother

JOEY KASSELBAUM, the slow-witted friend of Gene and Miller

STANLEY,

ALFIE BETCHA,
 WILLIE MAINE,
 JOE GERHARDT, and
 JOHNNY GERHARDT, all boyhood friends of Miller
 DR. MCKINNEY, the veterinarian
 LOLA NIESSEN, Miller's piano teacher and
 VALESKA,
 PAULINE JANOWSKI,
 AGNES,
 FRANCIE, and
 RITA SCHNADIG, all women in his life

Tropic of Capricorn is the third of the seven volumes in which Henry Miller proposes to tell the story of his life. In the first volume, *Tropic of Cancer*, published in 1934, Miller chronicled his lusty days as an uninhibited pauper in postwar Paris; in the second, *Black Spring*, which appeared in 1936, his treatment of his experiences in Paris is interspersed with sections on his boyhood in Brooklyn. The present book deals exclusively with New York, specifically with Miller's childhood, adolescence, and the years of his early manhood, before he took up residence abroad in self-imposed exile. Literally speaking, Miller describes his life as a boy in a small neighborhood of Brooklyn, his coming of age and the development of his sexual prowess, his numberless feats of copulation (beginning at the age of fifteen, when he seduced his piano teacher who was nearly twice as old), his exasperatingly hectic job as the employment manager for the "Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company," and the inexhaustible indulgence of his friends, who subsidized his existence for much of the time. But *Tropic of Capricorn* is more than a simple recital of facts. It is actually an autobiographical novel, in which Miller reveals the emergence of his deepest, most vital self, and of that characteristically furious optimism with which he celebrates life and humanity in all its forms.

The book opens in a spirit of violent rebellion and denunciation. Miller recalls his childhood as a time of interior, philosophical reaction to the solidly established Nordic axiom that work, struggle, and effort, fortified by righteousness and

cleanliness, are the pillars on which a man's life must rest. Against this doctrine Miller set a creed of his own: that he would heed only the law of his personal independence, driven by the spur of caprice rather than the whip of compulsion. In the careful, cautious, foresighted restraint with which his parents labored for an ever-receding "tomorrow," Miller saw nothing but the paralysis of the inner self, the desiccation of life. Consequently, he developed a hatred of work, of conventional goals, of material success, of factories, of everything in America which destroys the human personality. He set out deliberately to establish himself as an anomaly, a voice of paradoxical joy and indignation crying out in a wilderness of spiritual death. This is really the key to Miller's "philosophy"—if we can use that term for the violent explosions of his mind. His defiant condemnation of conventional values is balanced by a rhapsodic yea-saying to life, a Whitmanian celebration of the cosmos in its most primitive, barbaric, undisciplined variety.

But like *Tropic of Cancer*, the value of *Tropic of Capricorn* lies in the fact that Miller anchors his cosmological speculation to the solid ground of his own rich and intense experience. Early in his life, he tells us, he learned to maintain his personal independence by assuming an attitude of sublime indifference toward ordinary tribulations—death, for example. When he was about twelve years old, his best friend died after a long illness. But Miller wasted no tears at the young boy's bier; he rejoiced that the boy's

death meant the end of suffering, for the boy and for those about him. From this incident Miller jumps chronologically forward to the years of his early manhood during World War I (in which he did not participate), when he spent most of his time searching for a job. In this case, as in that of his boyhood friend, however, Miller looked upon his prospects with a kind of Olympian detachment. He did not care deeply about getting any job in particular, and it was only by the merest twist of chance that he secured a responsible position with the "Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company of North America." He began by applying for a job as a messenger boy, but when the switchboard operator at the company's employment bureau turned him down, he became furious enough to take his case to the company's general manager. The result was an offer of a job as personnel manager, which Miller accepted.

The job turned out to be an almost crushing ordeal of constant chaos. Only about twenty per cent of the messenger force was composed of steady workers; the rest were drifters. This state of affairs meant that Miller was forced to hire and fire at a rapid rate; more important, it also meant that he was exposed to an extraordinarily varied collection of men and women from every part of the country and from virtually every part of the world. His applicants ranged from Hindus to prostitutes, from ex-convicts to Cherokee Indians. Miller treated nearly all of them as human beings in need, hiring with his heart rather than his head and thereby subverting company policy. The company often winced, but did not fire; in the end, after about five years, it was Miller himself who simply walked out.

After this Miller subsisted principally on the generosity of his friends (who were legion, he says) and of his wife, who seems to have provided him with little besides money. What becomes important in Miller's universe, therefore, is not so much what he does as what he sees and feels. A great part of the experiences

re-created in *Tropic of Capricorn* involve the people he meets and the books he reads. A chance encounter with a boyhood friend, just returned from Europe, for example, opened Miller's eyes to the exotic fascination of Capri, Pompeii, Morocco, and Paris, places he would later see for himself but which would always hold a special charm because of the way his friend described them. Later in the book, he tells of his response to Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, a book which intoxicated him with the excitement of creativity and intensified his own sense of self. It made him feel, he says, as if he had crossed a boundary line into a mysterious new realm, where he felt alone, unknown, and foreign. But it gave him also a new sense of order, an ability to understand virtually anything, even total confusion.

But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Bergsonian philosophy, and Miller is principally dedicated in this book to the reality of his own experiences—particularly of his encounters with the men and women who populate his unpredictable world. Needless to say, the women receive the lion's share of Miller's attention, for he is fascinated by them to the point of obsession. The opening chapter of *Tropic of Capricorn* is entitled "On the Ovarian Trolley," and it seems to set the tone for everything that follows. Miller's women wriggle through the pages of his book in a seemingly endless stream: Valeska, daughter of a prostitute and an anonymous Negro, who worked as Miller's secretary at the telegraph company and later committed suicide; Pauline Janowski, a homeless Jewess of about sixteen who read Balzac and yearned to be a writer; Monica, who came to New York from Buffalo with the body of her mother; Mara, an Egyptian Jewess; Francie, an accommodating Scottish girl whom Miller met in the Catskills; Agnes, her Irish-Catholic friend, and numerous others—whores, derelicts, anonymous ladies of the night. Few of these women assume

distinctive personalities, and all tend to merge into the gigantic abstraction of sex, which is Miller's overriding concern. He cares little for their names or faces; he is simply mesmerized by their genitals, which he describes in exhaustive detail. Miller, of course, is more than an ordinary lecher, and there is a kind of metaphysical dimension to his mania for the female organ. But curiously enough for a man with his zest for life, it is not the generative power of the female organ which attracts him. He is fascinated instead with its sheer mystery, and he revels in the freedom and frequency with which he tears away the curtain of conventional reticence about it. It holds for him a kind of mystic significance which he celebrates with untiring energy. He seems, in fact, to derive as much pleasure from discussing what is normally forbidden or censored as he derives from his own amoral behavior; he luxuriates in the license which permits him to use the great triumvirate of Anglo-Saxon obscenities: the four-letter words for copulation, human excrement, and the female genitals. There is something of the *bād'* boy run wild in Miller, gleefully scrawling his heart out on the lavatory wall.

It would hardly be fair, however, to dismiss the book as simply a lurid catalogue of Miller's sexual adventures. Much of it is graphic and vivid evocation of his early years in the Brooklyn neighborhood where he was born as the son of German tailor and grew up while he watched his environment change. The neighborhood that Miller describes exists now only in his memory, for it was, he says, deteriorating even as he passed his boyhood there; it was being radically altered by an invasion of Jews. When he returned to it as an adult, to the area of the little street called Fillmore Place which was once his entire world, he could no longer recognize it. The neighborhood he knew had been obliterated and nullified. It is precisely this feeling, perhaps, which lends a note of nostalgia to his recreation of the past.

But there is little of ordinary sentiment in his backward glance. He tells without remorse, for example, how he and his cousin Gene became embroiled in a rock fight when they were less than ten years old and the two of them stoned another boy to death. Miller recalls the incident without the slightest tremor of guilt; in his account of it, what emerges in boldest relief is not the act of murder but the spontaneous generosity of his Aunt Caroline, who greeted the boys when they returned home with two large slices of sour rye spread with fresh butter and sugar. The gift of the bread was for Miller something like an act of grace—unearned, unmerited, and therefore purer than any bread that he would later gain by the sweat of struggle. It retrospect, the bread assumes a sacramental significance in his mind.

The canvas of these early years is painted with bright if sometimes garish colors. Miller writes of his boyhood chums—of the slow-witted Joey Kasselbaum, whom he and Gene humored in their games of marbles; of Stanley, a Polish boy with a violent temper who would help young Miller to raid Aunt Caroline's icebox; of Alfie Betcha and a crazy boy named Willie Maine, both of whom got drunk at a neighborhood party and fell to biting one another; of a part-Irish youth named Johnny Gerhardt, who beat another boy senseless and then ran away from home; and of Johnny's brother Joe, who distinguished himself by the delicate act of apologizing to the beaten boy. Miller writes too of Dr. McKinney, the local veterinarian, who castrated stallions in public and let the blood run into the gutter; and he speaks with bitterness of his father's final illness, induced by his decision to renounce liquor. In the face of impending death, it seems, the old man suddenly acquired an astonishing piety. But this effort collapsed upon the departure of the local Congregationalist minister (whom Miller's father had come to worship), and the experience left him a broken, empty, disillusioned man. The

interior life had been drained out of him, and Miller, remembering happier days with a light-hearted father, mourns the loss.

But there is little in his past that Miller mourns. On the whole, his book is an emphatic celebration of life, a paean to

vitality. From the sordid sensuality of the Broadway dance hall to the heights of his mystic communion with Bergson, from the spasms of his copulative moments to the depths of his cosmological speculations, Miller is the apostle of the living self.

TWILIGHT IN ITALY

Type of work: Travel essays

Author: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

Time: 1912-1913

Locale: The Tyrol; Lago di Garda, Italy

First published: 1916

Principal personages:

D. H. LAWRENCE

FRIEDA WEEKLEY, later Frieda Lawrence, the Signora

IL DURO, an Italian peasant

JOHN (GIOVANNI), an Italian immigrant to America

Twilight in Italy is a small book of travel essays, worth reading both for their own sake and for the light they throw on the context of Lawrence's work.

D. H. Lawrence was a prolific and versatile writer whose plays, poems, novels, novellas, and short stories—more than forty volumes produced in a writing life of twenty years—often need to be read in the context of his essays, pamphlets, and travel books. There are four of these last, excluding the passages of description in his letters recording his expatriation in Europe, America, and Australia. The first of these journeys is recorded in his first travel book, *Twilight in Italy*.

Both journey and book came at an important time in his life. Thereafter the gift for natural description and for the "felt" characterization which distinguishes his fiction was so broadly used as to make him geographically the most universal English writer of this century.

In August, 1912, Lawrence and Frieda, then Mrs. Ernest Weekley, walked south from Icking, near Munich, to Riva on Lago di Garda, which was then in Austrian territory, and later, in September, to the Italian Gargnano, farther down the lake. They stayed there till

April 1913, while Lawrence worked at his writing as he had not previously been able to do. There he completed the final draft of *Sons and Lovers*, wrote the German stories, collected in *The Prussian Officer*, and began the poems published in *Look, We Have Come Through*. To this versatile performance he added the first versions of the travel essays published in first the *English Review* and in 1916 as *Twilight In Italy*.

The first of the essays deals with a walking trip in the Tyrol before the journey south to Italy; it is entitled "The Crucifix Across the Mountains." The key word "strange" is employed on the first page and thereafter frequently, for that was not only a strange country in its people and its language, but also in customs, such as wayside crucifixes, new to Lawrence's Congregationalism. The different forms of these fixed objects allow Lawrence's fancy to bring each to life; the essay becomes a portrait gallery of pitiable, terrifying, beautiful, violated, male Messiahs who suffered hideously for bringing their message. The significance of this gallery in Lawrence's work need not be stressed.

The release of Lawrence's fancy on

strange objects stemmed from his decision not to return to teaching after his illness in 1911 and 1912, but to live by his pen. This courageous decision gave him three novel sensations in Gargnano. He was living with Frieda as a married man, his time was his own, and he was in a foreign country. He completed several old manuscripts which would be published in the next two or three years and he began new work. The completion of *Sons and Lovers* marked the first stage in his withdrawal from his Nottinghamshire material, a withdrawal continued in *The Rainbow* and effected in Aaron's visit to Italy in *Aaron's Rod*. Placing his personal material in clearer artistic focus marked also the beginning of his major phase as a writer. He changed the style of his writing, as first seen in the poems in *Look, We Have Come Through*, and this change accorded with the growing resolution of his ideas into what is usually called his "philosophy." The effect of these changes was to break the first draft of his next novel into two novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, but the ideas behind these changes are apparent in *Twilight in Italy*, the first groping statement of the Lawrencian mystique.

The essays in the book are four, of which the second, "On the Lago di Garda," is divided into seven short sketches amounting to more than half the book. Lawrence records conversations with chance acquaintances on his hike across the Alps and his walks around Gargnano. More than a picture of foreign people, the essay records Lawrence's reflections precipitated by novel surroundings and time to think; his developing consciousness of the "dark sun" in man first finds utterance in this book; it has very little to do with Italy. That consciousness was to be developed in his later novels and fed by his travel books on Mexico, Sardinia, and Etruria. His cheerfully free use of the material of *Twilight in Italy* is shown by the three versions of "Christs in the Tyrol" or "The Crucifix Across the Mountains,"

by his reference to this material at the conclusion of *Women in Love*, and by the exclusion of at least two travel pieces belonging to this period, sketches published posthumously in *Love Amongst the Haystacks* in 1930.

Although Frieda Weekley appears fleetingly as "the Signora" (as she was to appear as "the Queen Bee" in *Sea and Sardinia*), her interest in the *bambini*—she had recently left her own children for Lawrence—is a clue to the deeper influence she had on this book and Lawrence's writing. By her act Lawrence moved from childish observer or adolescent dabbler in the rites of married love to full participant; the currents he had felt in married couples he now knew at first hand, and could graft his insights on to the Italians he watched as a semi-tourist: "Il Duro" and his women, for example. But although there is also observation of parents and children, as in the story of "John," the main interest is in individuals. Where their individuality is respected, the observation is sufficiently keen, as in "The Spinner and the Monks," to present a vivid and poetic picture; the individual male characters, such as the *padrone* in "The Lemon Gardens," tend, however, to become either "Italians" or "males," and the glib use of national or universal labels tends to make them meaningless. One feels that the subject here, as frequently elsewhere, is simply Lawrence, and the projections of emotion tell us about him, not about the objects he scrutinizes.

The total value of *Twilight in Italy* to Lawrence was threefold: first, it established his technique of obtaining his material by rapidly "glimpsing" his objects; second, he glimpsed for the first time the "dark sun" or "dark god" in strange objects; third, from this vision he worked out his philosophy of the "demon" which drove him and his characters to do what they did not consciously want to do, giving his work its characteristic harshness and truth to life. Only New Mexico was to provide an equally valuable novelty.

Although Lawrence was always a tourist, his travels made it possible for an Englishman to write memorable poems on cypresses and a snake. After *Twilight in Italy* he preferred not to see the object but to know it intuitively. The technique of glimpsing the object allowed him to develop the shorter forms of fiction, to establish a flow of introspection as his main device in characterization, and to shift

abruptly scenes, characters, and emotions, resulting inevitably in the typical close to a Lawrence story: the characters simply move on. The heat and light and shadows of Italy were necessary to the formation of his technique and his philosophy of blood-knowledge; but in order to realize this fact to the full it was necessary for him to see the object indistinctly, in the twilight.

TWO ESSAYS ON ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Type of work: Psychological monographs

Author: Carl G. Jung (1875-1961)

First published: 1928

Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, now published in English as Volume I of the *Collected Works*, has often been called the best introduction to Jung's work that the beginning student can find. Both "On the Psychology of the Unconscious" and "Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious" are 1928 revisions of essays that Jung wrote in 1912 and 1916. (Almost all of Jung's early work was revised extensively before its appearance in the collected edition to which he devoted his last years.)

"On the Psychology of the Unconscious" begins, as so many of Jung's monographs do, with a version of his famous criticism of Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler. Jung, who was Freud's most famous disciple from 1909 to 1914, held differences in ideas that led to personal differences which have been continued with more than enough rancor by their followers even today. One of the crucial points was Jung's announcement that the Freudian libido was too narrowly concerned with sexual energy and that Adler's definition of libido as a will to power was also too simplistic. Jung called this basic reservoir of human drives "psychic energy." Jung, however, endorsed the cornerstone of Freud's theory, the dream analysis, calling this technique "the royal road to the unconscious." But Jung would have us rise above too exclusive a concern

with sexuality or the will to power. These drives are more important to young men than they are to the complete man over a long life-span. They are partial truths, as Jung saw them, and he proposed a theory of the psyche that would transcend both and contain other aspects.

Undoubtedly there is much to be said for Jung's criticism of Freud and Adler as being concerned too reductively with elective forces in the analysis of human motivation. But as time passed, Jung turned more to mythology and folklore for keys to understanding the unconscious of his patients, while Freud always stayed within the confines of the patient's personal experience from childhood on. More importantly, no matter how one reacts to Jungian theory, he must acknowledge an unrelenting tendency in the Swiss psychologist to schematize. Again and again in Freud's productive career, his ideas about the unconscious and its significance changed because of the material presented him by his patients. In Jung's analysis, however, a few details from dreams led him to set up categories of psychological behavior and characterological type, drawn from his extensive research into primitive religions and the mysticism of Europe and the Near East. This tendency to set up formal patterns of meaning everywhere from myth and legend have led many of Jung's critics to

refuse him the name of scientist; they insist that he is another German philosopher, and a medieval one at that.

Like many makers of mystical systems, Jung insists that everything within the mind is double. Conflict may be destructive to mental health, but it also is necessary to spiritual development. His belief is that energy results from the tension of opposites. For the young, says Jung, the conflicts are outside—with parents, with society—and here, as noted, the analysis of Freud and Adler are most valuable. But the conflicts of mature man are within. Many are unable to form a significant self because they are unable or unwilling to come to satisfactory terms with the threatening or "shadow" aspects of the collective unconsciousness.

This last division of the mind is another great distinction between Jungian theory and Freudian. Jung postulates a racial or collective unconsciousness, containing what he (and Jacob Burckhardt) called "primordial images," figures containing those qualities dramatized in the great myths of past cultures. These images of demonic power are not inherited in themselves, but the thought patterns that produced them are. For Jung there is a personal unconsciousness such as Freud described, containing our repressed personal emotions. But the collective consciousness is, according to Jung, much more obscure and more powerful, charged with potential for good and evil. Jung also formulated a distinctive dream analysis. Every interpretation of a dream that equates a dream image with a real object he calls interpretation on the objective level. But he contrasted that view with his own subjective interpretation which brings the dreamer back to himself and is synthetic rather than analytic. This is the point at which the vast store of myth and legend material come in, as Jung examines dreams in terms of the struggle for mental health and significant life. The archetype of the hero is one of the most famous he describes, and he relates how both dreams and legends are

parallel in their depiction of the lonely voyage of the hero, beneath or through the sea, to a cave or castle where he must battle a monster for the treasure. The hero image is the health-giving power of the unconscious, Jung says, and the monster is the shadow side—perhaps the dark mother, the feminine image in its nihilistic phase. The treasure the hero can win is life itself, i.e., mental balance, a process labelled by Jung "individuation." For Jung, dreams are another form of the old legends; they are what they say and are not to be translated out of symbolism into psychological motivation, as they were by Freud. To analyze dreams we need to draw parallels from primitive material, because dreams come from the unconsciousness that contains remnants of man's experience in all preceding epochs of evolution. These images are the dominant powers of laws and principles. Prominent in this dark reservoir of the past, besides the hero, are figures Jung called the shadows, the wise old man, the mother, and child, and the anima and the animus, the images of the feminine and the masculine ideals respectively. Charged with power that is beyond good or evil, many of these images carry their own shadow or destructive charge. The wise old man in his malevolent role would appear as Satan or some other demon. The mother may be the generous, nurturing aspect of woman, or she may appear as dark chaos, the shape of mindless emotion into which the self can sink without a trace.

The all-important process of individuation is achieved, says Jung, by analyzing and compensating for these demonic powers that threaten psychic stability. The process, involving suffering and action, is often depicted in dreams by rectangles and circles—enclosures of perfection that Jung termed "mandalas."

Much of this analysis is like philosophy, Jung admitted, but he added that such must be, for the psyche seeks expression that will involve its whole nature, not merely correct minor irritating

obstacles that cause neurosis. One of the essential needs of man's irrational nature is the idea of God, Jung insisted. It is necessary for man's health that the image of the ideal be charged with power and projected outside himself into religious myth whose action he will imitate and whose standards he will uphold.

In "The Relation Between the Ego and the Unconscious," Jung sketches many of these concepts again. (Like the dreams of his patients, Jung's works seem endlessly moving back and forth over much the same ground.) Here, however, he also describes the function of the *persona*, that mask the psyche creates to mediate between the desire of the unconscious and the outside world. Individuation consists of the creation of an authentic self, living in dynamic but useful tension between those two forces. If the unconsciousness rides roughshod over the

persona, psychosis results. If the unconsciousness is not expressed in some useful way, however, the power from the libido can never be harnessed, and unending psychic paralysis, characterized by unceasing tension and anxiety, results. Man must use this dark power, which Jung calls "mana," and not be used by it.

It is interesting to observe that many literary people and humanists have become champions of Jung, but few scientists. Even though Jung seems so often in his analysis merely to substitute one system of metaphor for another, rather than bring us to any basically new understanding of mental process, there can be no denying that, by joining comparative mythology to psychology, Jung has had extraordinary influence upon both the reading and the writing of literary works in this century.

THE TWO TOWERS

Type of work: Novel

Author: J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-)

Type of plot: Epic romance

Time of plot: The Third Age in a remote legendary past

Locale: The Middle-Earth, chiefly Rohan, Fangorn, Gondor, and Ithilien

First published: 1954

Principal characters:

FRODO BAGGINS, the Ring-bearer

SAMWISE GAMGEE (SAM), his loyal servant

MERIADOC BRANDYBUCK (MERRY) and

PEREGRIN TOOK (PIPPIN), young hobbits, Frodo's cousins and friends

GANDALF (MITHRANDIR), a wizard, returned from the depths and transformed into the White Rider

ARAGORN, the courageous descendant of kings

LEGOLAS, the son of the Elven-King of Mirkwood

GIMLI, a dwarf, the friend of Legolas

SARUMAN, a wizard, formerly leader of the White Council, now a traitor greedy for power

GOLLUM (SMÉAGOL), a loathsome, corrupted hobbit, once owner of the Ring

THÉODEN, the aged King of Rohan

ÉOMER, his warrior nephew

GRIMA WORMTONGUE, the minister of Théoden, but a secret agent of Saruman

TREEBEARD (FANGORN), leader of the Ents, strange tree-like people

SAURON, the Dark Lord of Mordor

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Critique:

The Two Towers is the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings*, a mythological and legendary narrative laid in an imaginary past of great antiquity. Like its predecessor, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and its successor, *The Return of the King*, the volume has its roots in faërie, which is not quite the same thing as our conventional fairyland. The setting is a country inhabited by creatures of miraculous goodness or horrifying evil just beyond the borders of our so-called "real" world, and its time is not our time. In his essay "On Fairy-stories," Tolkien defines a fairy story as an account of the adventures or experiences of men in faërie or on its shadowy borders. He defends the idea that fairy-stories should be written for adults and read by them, and not, as an American scholar said of Sir Walter Scott's novels, unjustly "banished to the nursery." In *The Two Towers*, Tolkien's fertile imagination continues to pour out fascinating beings and exciting adventures; and his poetic spirit continues to cast a light of heartrending beauty and a shadow of sadness on his story. In the men of Rohan he recaptures the heroic spirit of *Beowulf*; in his creation of Ents, gigantic herdsmen of trees who resemble their own flocks, he goes far beyond his predecessors who have furnished their pages with animated tree-beings; and in the spidery Shelob, he creates a malevolent, blood-chilling monster worthy to join his favorites, the great dragons of Germanic story. Aragorn, who grows in stature as the book moves on, speaks for the author and helps to furnish a critique of the book and its philosophy. He points out that the earth itself is a principal matter of legend and that the events of the present provide the legends of the future. He also declares that good and evil are the same in all generations. It is Aragorn also who pronounces most clearly "the doom of choice." For *The Lord of the Rings* is a story about choice, or free will. Character after character is brought to a choice, and the sum of the choices makes

the fate of the character. In this volume as in the others there are lyrical passages which are small prose poems. Such a passage is the description of Gandalf, returned from the depths and transfigured. The author paints a picture of the wonderful old man holding sunlight in his hands as if they were a cup. The power of the image is increased when the old man looks straight into the sun.

The Story:

Immediately after Frodo the Ring-bearer and Sam set off to fulfill their quest for the destruction of the Ring of power, a band of orcs captured the two remaining hobbits, Merry and Pippin. In trying to defend them, Boromir of Gondor was mortally wounded. Dying, he confessed to Aragorn that he had tried to take the Ring from Frodo, who had put on the Ring and vanished to escape him. Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli prepared Boromir's body, placed it in an elven boat, and sent it over the falls down the Great River. They followed the tracks of the orcs in an attempt to rescue Merry and Pippin. After several days they met a company of Riders of Rohan led by Éomer, nephew of King Théoden, who reported killing the orcs. They had not seen the hobbits, but lent horses to the travelers to follow the trail.

Pippin had tempted an orc to run away with the hobbits for the Ring, which he thought they had. When a Rider killed him, they escaped in darkness and entered the mysterious forest Fangorn. There they met Treebeard, leader of the Ents, who sheltered them. After hearing their story, he called an Entmoot to decide what action the Ents should take against the forces of evil. On the third day, the treelike Ents reached their decision and marched on Isengard, the traitor Saruman's stronghold.

Finding hopeful signs that their friends had escaped the orcs, the three hunters entered Fangorn. There they met Gandalf, returned from the depths with

new power as the result of his ordeal. He called Shadowfax, the great horse borrowed from Rohan's King, and the four rode toward Théoden's hall. Théoden was bent with age and greeted Gandalf inhospitably. His pale, wizened minister Wormtongue, who nourished the King's infirmities, sat at his feet and vilified Gandalf. The latter raised his staff; lightning flashed, and Wormtongue sprawled on the floor. Gandalf led Théoden from the shadowy hall, and the old King stood erect and returned to manhood. He announced his determination to lead his people against Saruman. To Wormtongue, whose treachery Gandalf exposed, he ordered a choice: to ride into battle against Saruman or to accept banishment. Wormtongue spat and rode away to join Saruman. Théoden left his niece Éowyn as regent. He presented Shadowfax to Gandalf, who departed on a secret mission.

The battle of Helm's Deep was fought with great odds favoring Saruman's orcs and wild hillmen. Éomer and Aragorn performed heroic deeds, and Gimli and Legolas held a contest as to who should kill more orcs. A strange forest appeared on the hills with the morning. Théoden led a gallant charge; and Gandalf returned as the White Rider, striking terror into the enemy. The orcs fled into the forest, but none came out. After the battle Gandalf led Théoden and others to Isengard for a parley with Saruman. On the way they saw several Ents, and in the night the strange forest strode past them. Arriving at Isengard, they found devastation. The walls were torn down and the stronghold itself was filled with steaming water; only the ancient impregnable tower, Orthanc, remained undamaged. Seated at the ruined gates were Merry and Pippin. Merry welcomed them in the name of Treebeard and informed them that Saruman was closeted with Wormtongue in Orthanc. The hobbits told how the Ents had attacked Isengard, destroyed its walls with their rootlike hands, and diverted the river waters through

Saruman's underground domain. Then, to their amazement, Gandalf had arrived and asked Treebeard for help against the orcs. The walking forest had moved off toward Helm's Deep. Finally, Wormtongue had arrived. Treebeard had given him the choice of joining Saruman or waiting for Théoden and Gandalf. He had chosen Saruman.

Gandalf called Saruman to the window of Orthanc. The corrupted wizard tried to sway them with his persuasive voice. When his enchantment failed, Gandalf offered him freedom to join them against Sauron or to go to Mordor. He refused to leave Orthanc and turned away; but Gandalf called him back, cast him from the White Council, and broke his staff. As Saruman crawled away, Wormtongue flung a heavy crystal ball at Gandalf. Pippin picked it up, but Gandalf quickly retrieved it. Leaving the Ents to keep Saruman from escaping, the company rode back toward Théoden's hall. Pippin slipped the stone away from Gandalf and looked into it. His eye was drawn to the Dark Tower and, confronted by Sauron, he lost consciousness. Gandalf revived him and learned that Sauron had failed to question him about the Ring.

During these events, Frodo and Sam traveled through barren country, trailed by Gollum. They waylaid him, but spared his life, and he swore by the Ring to serve Frodo loyally. From this point he became their guide, leading them toward Mordor. During their journey, Ring-wraiths sometimes passed overhead, striking terror into their hearts. As they drew nearer to Mordor, the Ring grew heavier, and Frodo felt the constant probing of Sauron's evil Eye. They entered Ithilien, a wooded land with flowing streams. Frodo and Sam were captured by men of Gondor led by Faramir, the son of Denethor and brother of Boromir, who told them of seeing Boromir's body floating in the elven boat. In a rock chamber behind a waterfall he questioned them and learned more of their errand than they

intended; he promised help and gave them provisions. He spared the life of Gollum at Frodo's entreaty, led them back to the forest, and sent them on their way.

Gollum led them toward the tower of Minas Morgul, from which an army marched out led by the chief Ringwraith, who stopped as if drawn by the power of the Ring, but then marched on. Gollum slipped away. When he returned and found them asleep, a good impulse almost redeemed him, but the evil light came back into his eyes. He led them far into a climbing tunnel and deserted them. They heard a bubbling noise. Frodo held up the glass given him by Galadriel, the Elf-Queen. In its piercing light appeared Shelob, a huge spidery monster. With temporarily blinded eyes, she retreated. The end of the tunnel was

blocked by her web, but Frodo cut through the cords with his elven sword, Sting, and ran outside. Sam saw that Shelob had used another exit and was pursuing Frodo. As he shouted a warning, Gollum leaped on his back. Driving Gollum off, he turned back to see Shelob winding Frodo in cords. He snatched up Sting and attacked her. As she flung her foul body on him, he held Sting so that she wounded herself. In agony she dragged herself back to her hole leaving a trail of slime. Finding no sign of life in Frodo, Sam decided that he must try to complete the quest alone. When he heard orc voices, he put on the Ring and vanished. The orcs discovered Frodo's body and carried it toward the tower. Sam learned from their talk that Frodo was stunned, not dead. Frodo was alive and a captive. Sam was locked outside.

TWO WOMEN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Alberto Moravia (Alberto Pincherle, 1907-)

Time: 1943-1944

Locale: Sant'Euphemia, Italy

First published: 1957

Principal characters:

CESIRA, a shopkeeper's widow from the Ciociaria hills

ROSETTA, her daughter

CONCETTA, a peasant woman

VINCENZO, her husband

ROSARIO, and

GIUSEPPE, their sons

FILIPPO, a refugee

MICHELE, his son

PARIDE, a sullen peasant

CLORINDO, a black marketeer

Alberto Moravia has concerned himself chiefly with the ambiguities and brutalities of love in a disorganized postwar world. This theme runs threadlike through the background of *Two Women*, but it is not the whole story or the center of meaning. In this book he has abandoned for the time being the battle of the sexes to tell the story of some people involved in the immediate catastrophe of a world at war.

Undoubtedly, Moravia is one of the most interesting and important of contemporary European writers. The trouble is that he has too often been read for the wrong effects, especially in the United States, where in 1949 the unrestrained sexuality of *The Woman of Rome* brought him to the attention of critics and readers alike. Since that time a series of novels and brilliant short stories have served to establish his reputation as a

writer whose preoccupation with sex, as his admirers maintain, is only one aspect of his skilled and sensitive art. Specifically, his subject is a sick society, and few novelists have been so successful in re-creating the atmosphere of moral decay and despair which he sees overshadowing his generation. With incisive, brutal realism he has tried to dispel the haze of illusion which man likes to throw over whatever is weak or sordid, in order to reveal one aspect of the problem of evil as it exists in our century. If his writing suggests at times the morally lurid and the decadent, the fault lies in the material with which he works. As most of his fiction shows, after its surface effects have been viewed in relation to his theme, he remains a writer of deep sensibility and compelling honesty of vision.

These qualities are again apparent in *Two Women*, which is in many ways the novel coming closest to Moravia's own experience. Having engaged in anti-Fascist journalism, he was marked for reprisal when Mussolini's regime collapsed and the Germans occupied Italy in 1943. To escape arrest he and his wife fled to the mountains in an effort to reach the area held by the Allies near Monte Cassino. Unable to escape into Allied territory because of the heavy fighting, they lived in a pigsty under appalling primitive conditions until they were liberated nine months later. He drew upon this experience for his description of the hut in which Cesira and her daughter find a refuge after their flight to Sant'Eufemia.

The story is told by Cesira, a peasant woman from the Ciociaria region south-east of Rome. Widow of a Roman shopkeeper, she has continued to run the shop after her husband's death. Selfish, shrewd, strong-willed, Cesira has little concern for anyone or anything except herself and her eighteen-year-old daughter Rosetta. When the war comes, she welcomes it because in wartime food becomes scarce and dear. Before long she and Rosetta are doing a thriving black market business with the flour, eggs,

hams and potatoes they are able to get from the peasant farmers in her home village and other country places near Rome. Sometimes she says to her daughter that she hopes the war will continue several more years, to provide the girl with a trousseau and a dowry. But when the Germans occupy Rome and Allied bombing raids begin to threaten the city, she and Rosetta flee to the Ciociaria hills. At first they plan to go to live with Cesira's parents; then they hear that the village has been evacuated and they are forced to settle at Fondi, where they live for a time with a slatternly woman named Concetta, her husband Vincenzo, and their two deserter sons, Rosario and Giuseppe, who are hiding from patrols scouring the countryside for men to be sent off to work in Germany.

This refuge proves unsafe when Cesira overhears Concetta's plan to buy her loutish sons' safety by turning Rosetta over to the Fascist braves. Mother and daughter then flee to Sant'Eufemia, a small village high in the mountain overlooking the valley. Here they live for the next nine months in circumstances of squalor, suspicion, hunger, and fear. This section of the novel is easily the best in its slow accumulation of details vividly drawn to show what life is like when it is reduced to its essentials of food, clothing, and sleep. At first there is plenty to eat. Filippino, a venal shopkeeper from Fondi, has his hut stuffed with food on which he and his family feast and which he sells to his less fortunate neighbors, at a price. Paride, from whom Cesira and Rosetta rent a hut, is grasping and vicious. The wives are no better than their husbands; charity and dignity have been drained out of them. The only character worthy of respect is Michele, Filippino's son, once a student for the priesthood but now an embittered existentialist philosopher. His belief is that his neighbors must lose everything before they will understand anything or be able to see themselves and their world.

Only then, as in Cesira's case, will

they grow in understanding and compassion as well. As the months pass and her store of money shrinks, she and Rosetta come to know something of the meaning of suffering, for their life becomes a struggle for survival among the brutal and vicious peasants. Some of their neighbors disappear, taken away by the Germans. Allied bombers raid Fondi. Two English escapees appear, are fed, and are sent on their way. Theft becomes impersonal. One night Michele reads the story of the raising of Lazarus. Out of events such as these the author builds a texture of experience made up of daily acts of living, boredom, small excitements, details unimportant in themselves in many instances but as realistic and effective as anything he has written. Perhaps, as Moravia suggests, this is the way men are to be seen as they really are, not in peace but in wartime, when respect for law and order and the fear of God no longer exist.

In a scene of crashing irony the liberation, not the war, brings about the ruin of Rosetta, raped by a group of French Moroccan troops in a ruined church. This

experience makes the girl promiscuous, causes her mother to lose all belief in decency and goodness when Rosetta takes up with a flashy young black marketeer named Clorindo, Concetta's brutal son Rosario, and others of a gang of young toughs the war has spawned. Rosetta is the second victim of the debacle; Michele has been killed by fleeing Germans. Out of these events, however, compassion and sorrow and true understanding are reborn. Cesira discovers the evil in herself and the novel ends on a note of renewed hope as mother and daughter return to Rome.

Two Women is moving and compassionate in its harsh, unblinking realism and its study of the nature of women and men under circumstances of war which become a test of the human spirit to suffer and endure. But the novel, in spite of the many fine things it contains, presents one flaw: Man's moral plight springs from qualities deeper and more universal than politics or the holocaust of war, as Moravia seems to imply in this bleak and bitter book.

UNDER MILK WOOD

Type of work: Drama

Author: Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

Time: The present

Locale: Llaregyb—also called Llareggub—a mythical seaside village in Wales

First presented: 1954

Principal characters:

CAPTAIN CAT, a blind retired sea captain

THE REVEREND ELI JENKINS, one of God's innocents

POLLY GARTER, the village wanton

MOG EDWARDS, a draper

MYFANWY PRICE, a dressmaker and sweetshop proprietress

MR. PUGH, a schoolmaster

MRS. PUGH, his wife, a shrew

MR. WALDO, a barber, herbalist, and lecher

MRS. OGMORE-PRITCHARD, the twice-widowed owner of Bay View, a house for paying guests

BUTCHER BEYNON

MRS. BEYNON, his wife

GOSSAMER BEYNON, a schoolteacher

ORGAN MORGAN, a musician

CHERRY OWEN, a tippler

MRS. OWEN, his wife

WILLY NILLY, the postman

MRS. WILLY NILLY, his wife, who reads all the mail before her husband delivers it
 SINBAD SAILORS, a young pubkeeper
 MARY ANN SAILORS, his grandmother
 LORD CUT-GLASS, an eccentric recluse
 NOGOOD BOYO, a fisherman
 OCKY MILKMAN

Dylan Thomas conformed as completely as Byron or Shelley ever did to the world's image of the romantic past. His looks, his speech, his behavior were unpredictable, odd, and swaggering. He was reckless, innocent, drunken, bawdy, sullen, boisterous, irreverent, and his death in a New York hospital was as outrageously public as the life he lived. But he possessed one quality that redeemed all the rest: he was a dedicated craftsman in his devotion to his art. As he declared in the prologue to his *Collected Poems*, the source of his poetry was a love of mankind and the praise of God.

A like claim may be made for *Under Milk Wood*, which Thomas subtitled "A Play for Voices." Completed shortly before his death, posthumously produced in its entirety over the B.B.C. several months later, this rich and earthy prose drama testifies to his scrupulous craftsmanship, his delight in character, his humorous apprehension of experience, and his talent for re-creating the world of nature in all its sights and sounds. In addition, the play marks a stage in the development of his career, presenting the world without rather than a world within, for it was written at a time when he seemed to be turning away from a highly personal poetry and the exploration of his own private sensibility to a wider view of man and society.

The work has a history stretching over more than a decade. In one of his early stories Thomas first used the invented name Llareggub—the word-play is clearly apparent—but the idea of writing a drama with this imaginary setting did not come to him, apparently, until after he had written "Quite Early One Morning," a picture of life in a small Welsh town described in dramatic fashion over the

B.B.C. in 1944. Following the suggestion that his material deserved more extended treatment, he first planned a play to be called *The Town Was Mad*, its theme the ironic contrast between individuality and innocence on the one hand, prejudice and social conformity on the other. As originally planned, the story was to deal with a government commission sent to investigate a community of eccentrics regarded as an open-air lunatic asylum. The indignant citizens insist that a trial be held and their case heard. But when the prosecution describes a town that is ideally sane, the people of the village decide that they want no part of the "sane" world and beg to be cut off from it as quickly as possible. Later, however, Thomas returned to the simple treatment of his earlier broadcast, sheared away the structure of dramatic plot, and decided to let his story grow naturally out of the personalities and everyday involvements of his people. When he died suddenly in November, 1953, three separate versions of his play existed in manuscript. The version finally decided on for presentation and publication was that accepted by his executors as the final work.

It is easy to understand the appeal that *Under Milk Wood*, as "A Play for Voices," holds for the radio audience and the general reader. The true quality of Dylan Thomas' verse was always more auditory than visual, so that the poems which frequently look odd or complicated on the printed page often make marvelous sense when they are read aloud. Then the poet's cumulative and indirect imagery creates a tonal effect of movement between line and line. In radio presentation, where understanding is by the ear alone, the auditory effect of sound and meaning become one. The "sound" poet who

speaks with such eloquence and passion in his verse stands, perhaps, as one of the unnamed narrators in *Under Milk Wood*, where Thomas' lines re-echo in the receptive ear until a town and its people come vividly to life within the imagination of the hearer. The play relies almost entirely on the spoken word. Furthermore, under its verbal sophistication, this is the people's poetry in the truest sense—rambunctious, impassioned, ribald, lyric, funny, tender. It may be argued that the brevity of life, the frailty of beauty, the ravages of time, are not the final message of a great poet. Nevertheless, these have been the themes of lasting poetry, and they give to the work its air of timeless wisdom and love.

Perhaps the best way to describe the precise nature and structure of the play is to set it into relationship with other literary works. The most obvious is the radio drama or documentary, in which characterization and action are achieved by the spoken word alone. But here Thomas went beyond the conventional dramatic broadcast in his appeal to the imagination and in the patterning of sounds as his characters appear, have their say, and retire until they are heard from again. Another resemblance is to Joyce's *Ulysses*, especially in the setting of a single town, the limitation of the action to one day from nighttime to nighttime, and the bold use of language. Another comparison is to Wilder's *Our Town*. But where Wilder's play is a nostalgic lament for the missed grace and richness of life and beauty unrecognized, *Under Milk Wood* is an unabashed celebration of life in all its innocence, desires, frustrations, pathos, oddities, and bawdiness. In this respect the play reminds one of Shakespeare's presentation of what he called "country matters" or Chaucer's earthy humor and realism.

Two voices, usually speaking in alternate sequence, set the scene, introduce the people, comment on their characters, secret dreams, gentle deeds, and iniquities. The opening shows night's deep

shadows over sleeping Llaregyb, a small, decayed seaside resort village. So the guidebook might describe the town, a place of no particular interest to the sportsman, the health-seeker, or the tourist. But the poet speaks otherwise. Under the black, moonless sky, the cobblestone streets are silent and Milk Wood is empty of lovers, the darkness disturbed only by the secret, rustling animal life. In their darkened houses the people of Llaregyb sleep, their dreams filled with love or hate, desire or dismay.

In this manner, as they voice their dreams, we meet the people of the play. First there is Captain Cat, the retired blind sea captain through whose dreams echo the voices of sailor friends lost long ago and with whom he shared the same girl, Rosie Probert. There is Mog Edwards, the draper, who in sleep loves Myfanwy Price more than all the cloths and weaves in the great Cloth Hall of the world. Myfanwy, also secretly in love, promises to warm his heart beside the fire so that he can wear it under his vest after he closes his shop. Mr. Waldo lies in a drunken slumber beside his unhappy, unloved wife; other women he has known pass through his dreams. Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard gives orders to the two husbands she bossed into their graves. Inspectors fly into the dreams of Mrs. Beynon, the butcher's wife, to persecute her husband for selling the meat of cats and owls. Her daughter Gossamer, a schoolteacher, dreams of her lover, a small, rough man with a bright bushy tail like a fox's. Sinbad Sailors hugs his pillow and imagines that he is embracing Gossamer Beynon. His grandmother dreams of the Garden of Eden. Willy Nilly, the postman, walks fourteen miles in his sleep. Polly Garter dreams of babies.

Day breaks and the people rise and go about their business. More than one story is told or suggested, but there is no plot. The Reverend Eli Jenkins, whose God is a God of innocence and wonder, goes to his door and in the bright sunshine sings

his morning service, a lyric that might have come out of Herrick. Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard, whose god is cleanliness, doesn't care to have boarders in her clean rooms and starched beds, their breath all over the furniture, their feet trampling her carpets. Ocky Milkman puts water in the milk before he delivers it. Mr. Pugh, the schoolmaster, daydreams of feeding his wife arsenic and weedkiller biscuit; at breakfast he reads *Lives of the Great Poisoners*, the title of his book concealed by a brown paper wrapper. Polly Garter nurses the youngest of her brood of bastards. Sinbad Sailors opens the Sailors Arms and drinks a pint of beer. (The hands of the ship's clock in the bar have stood at half-past eleven for half a century, so that it is always opening time in the pub.) Mr. Cherry Owen hears how in drink he hurled sago at the wall, missed his wife and the picture of Auntie Blossom, and danced on the table. Mrs. Willy Nilly, the postman's wife, steams open letters and reads them aloud. No-good Boyo, lying on his back among crabs legs and tangled lines in the unbaled bottom of his dinghy looks at the sky and says that he doesn't know or care who might be up there looking down. Sinbad Sailors continues to dote on Gossamer Beynon. Lord Cut-Glass, in his kitchen filled with clocks, one for each of his sixty-six years, squats to eat from a dish marked Fido. Captain Cat remembers the rowdy long ago of his youth.

Night falls and Llaregyb prepares to return to sleep. Mog Edwards and Myfanwy Price, a town's length between them, write to each other the daily love letters that they never mail. Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard seals her house against the night airs and the damp from the sea. The Reverend Eli Jenkins recites his sunset poem, asking God to look after and bless the people of Llaregyb, a town where

no one is wholly good or wholly bad. Mr. Cherry Owen goes off to get drunk at the Sailors Arms; his wife has two husbands, one drunk, one sober, and she loves them both. Captain Cat, secure in his bunk, goes voyaging in his dreams. In Milk Wood, where lovers stray, drunken Mr. Waldo hugs Polly Garter in the warm silence under the trees, but it is not Mr. Waldo or any of her lusty, six-foot lovers Polly is thinking of, but of Willy Weazel—little Willy Wee—who is now dead and six feet underground.

Such is Dylan Thomas' picture of life in the shadows of Milk Wood, which is many things to the people of the town. To the poet it is a place of wonder and love. To old Mary Ann Sailors, humble in her faith, it is God's garden, the proof of Eden, a heaven on earth, and her belief that Llaregyb is the Chosen Land. To the restless, night-haunted village boys and girls it is the bridal bed of secret love. To the Reverend Eli Jenkins it is a sermon in green, wind-shaken leaves on the innocence and goodness of man.

No conflict develops here; no problems are resolved. Yet the material of the play is as impressive as it is simple, for the poet's chief concern was to convey a sense of felt life that underlies the complicated business of living, even in commonplace lives and among people who are no better and no worse than they are in most places. *Under Milk Wood*, for all its brevity, is a play of subtly mixed effects. As an attempt to capture life at its source, it joins reality and fantasy as closely as humor and tragedy blend in the lives of the poet's characters. Dylan Thomas has in this drama presented a picture of ordinary life, but one universalized by insight and imagination. The innocence of art adds as much to his picture of life, as do the compassion and tolerance that come with experience.

UNDER THE VOLCANO

Type of work: Novel

Author: Malcolm Lowry (1909-1957)

Time: November 1, 1939

Locale: Quauhnahuac (Cuernavaca), Mexico

First published: 1947

Principal characters:

GEOFFREY FIRMIN, the British consul at Quauhnahuac

YVONNE CONSTABLE, his divorced wife

HUGH FIRMIN, his half brother

JACQUES LARUELLE, a French movie director

DR. ARTURO DÍAZ VIGIL, Geoffrey Firmin's doctor

Although *Under the Volcano* was well received on first publication, the novel did not sell well and was not reprinted for many years. Since 1958, however, it has shared in the growing appreciation of Malcolm Lowry which followed his death in 1957 and the publication of his third volume, *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place*, in 1961. Malcolm Lowry would have appreciated the irony of late acclaim. In the first chapter of *Under the Volcano*, Jacques Laruelle receives two messages from Geoffrey Firmin, the protagonist of the novel, who had died the year before. The doomed, damned, and dead Geoffrey still manages to communicate with the living, and they possibly pay more attention to his words now than they did when he was alive. The posthumous publications of Lowry serve much the same purpose, for it is obvious that readers and critics are paying more attention to what Lowry had to say.

His message is summed up in one word: doom. Strictly interpreted, the word means "inescapable fate," a tautological expression necessary in a generation which feels it cannot escape its fate; it is almost as if the volcano in whose shadows Geoffrey Firmin lives were also Lowry's imaginative projection of this century's crises and violence. Introducing the *Selected Poems* of Lowry, Earle Birney suggests the sense of doom as the central feature of his vision and work, and an English reviewer, noting that both Joyce in *Ulysses* and Lowry in this novel use one day for the action, suggests that the time of the novel is simply "Doomsday." Undoubtedly the sense of doom, intensified by waste and exile so preva-

lent in Lowry's life, is a response to the mid-1930's when Lowry began to write the novel; but it is no less relevant today. In *Under the Volcano* this doom is presented in the accidental way in which Hugh Firmin causes the death of Geoffrey, his half brother, by leaving an incriminating cable message in the jacket he borrowed from Geoffrey; in turn Geoffrey releases the horse which kills Yvonne Constable, his divorced wife.

The novel tends to move on an allegorical level into a consideration of the destiny of man. This idea is important, for the novel would be a failure if it were considered only on its realistic level. The action actually relates very little to any moral. The qualities that do tend to hold forth are the compassion for the agonies of the characters and the sense of doom which looms over the world of the alcoholic. Geoffrey's death is not seen as a punishment for his weaknesses; it is simply the culmination of the series of tragic events which take place in the consul's soul that day—his death merely ends the series of spiritual defeats he has succumbed to during his fall.

This idea must have been unpalatable in the late 1940's and in part could account for the lack of continuing interest in Lowry. Partly, also, the difficulty of estimating the true standing of *Under the Volcano* was due to a lack of enough Lowry material to place it correctly. We can now see that it is probably the center not only of his projected sequence of six novels, ending with *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place*, but also the center of all his work, particularly his poetry.

The work is a continuous whole with the central novel representing Hell or the point of lowest descent. The covert references to his first novel, *Ultramarine*, published in 1932, in the sixth chapter of *Under the Volcano* are balanced by references to Dollarton, Lowry's residence near Vancouver, in the fourth and ninth chapters; Dollarton is the setting of much of *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* and of his last poems. Similarly, *Under the Volcano* is echoed in his poems, including one entitled "For *Under the Volcano*," and in his shorter fiction.

Recognition of the midway position of the Mexican novel indicates three obvious features of Lowry's work: its painfully autobiographical sources; its unity or continuity; and its close texture and highly symbolic content, an indirect product of the first two features and the most obvious of the three.

The general features of Lowry's writings are shown in four aspects of *Under the Volcano*, two of which are immediately apparent. The novel is carefully placed in time and space; the events of the first chapter occur on November 1, 1939, exactly a year after the events of the remaining eleven chapters, which in turn are clearly timed as occurring at stated intervals throughout the eleven hours of the action. The geographical placing of the novel in Quauhnahuac (Cuernavaca), Mexico, for the first seven chapters and in nearby Tomalín and Parián for the last four affords Lowry an opportunity both to display his writing ability and to use his feeling for symbolism. The principal geographical feature of the area is the *barranca*, or ravine, which local legend says opened on the day of the Crucifixion; in the first paragraph of the novel there are geographical references to the Tropic of Cancer and the town of Juggernaut in India. The unity of Lowry's vision, possibly his single-minded view of the world, enables him both to fix himself firmly in space and time and to range rapidly over either,

giving a sense of cosmic urgency to the most innocent description; furthermore, his delight in symbolism is evident in the apparently innocuous introduction and juxtaposition of the terms "Crucifixion," "Cancer," and "Juggernaut."

As one reads further, however, two other aspects of the novel may strike one as severe disadvantages: one is the nature of the protagonist, the other the play of allusion mentioned above. But both are necessary to Lowry's serious intention. The allusions are part of the web of symbols constructed of reiterated references, for example those to a film poster advertising "Las Manos de Orlac con Peter Lorre," the Great Wheel at the fiesta (the "Maquina Infernal"), Maximilian and Carlotta, a dying turtle, shrieking fawns, a pariah dog which follows Geoffrey through the day and down into the *barranca*, the madman with the bicycle tire, and especially three signs: a finger post "To Parián," the inscription, to the effect that life without love is impossible, over the door of Laruelle's house, and, most important, the sign in the public garden warning that those who destroy will be evicted. At a glance it will be seen that these are capable of symbolic interpretation, but Lowry uses them both in complicated sets and at crucial moments of the action so as to increase their power enormously. Two instances show this usage. When Yvonne meets Geoffrey again, it is the morning after the night of the Red Cross Ball, held on All Hallows Eve in the Hotel Bella Vista; the year is 1938 and the first words of the consul are the statement that a corpse will be transported by express. The time, place, occasion, and message all combine in gruesome congruity, especially if one is aware, as on a second reading, that the corpse is Geoffrey himself. Again, in Chapter Seven Geoffrey contemplates the view across the *barranca* from the top of Laruelle's house and remembers how they used to play golf together as boys, having especial difficulty with what they called

"Hell Bunker" and retiring to the nineteenth hole in a pub called "The Case Is Altered." In his present changed circumstances he visualizes a golf shot across the *barranca* to what he terms the "Golgotha Hole," leading to his present refuge and the scene of his death, a tavern called "The Farolito" ("The Little Light-house") at Parián, where the finger post points him.

The irony of these sets of symbols is made horrible by the fact that Geoffrey Firmin knows what they presage but cannot communicate his knowledge to Yvonne, Laruelle, Hugh, or Dr. Vigil, all of whom are trying to help him escape. This lack of communication leads to what appears to be the second disadvantageous aspect of the novel, the character of the protagonist. At first sight Geoffrey looks like the feckless drunkard of some of Lowry's short stories, especially in "Gin and Goldenrod." The point is whether he is drinking mescal to drown his sorrows or, since he calls it the "nectar of immortality," to avoid his fate; in either case it both enables him to recognize the signs of doom and renders him incapable of showing their meaning to others, even when both Hugh and Yvonne see the dying Indian with him.

The explanation is that Geoffrey, as British consul, is not so much a character as a type. He is deliberately isolated from his native land, from the Mexicans around him, and from Hugh, Yvonne, and the others so that we may see him as Everyman. Within narrow limits he exemplifies the crisis of the liberals in the 1930's when they realized that the world was heading toward violence and disorder, that liberalism could not stop the

march of history.

Such was Lowry's conviction when he wrote *Under the Volcano*, and it forms part of the autobiographical base of the novel. Like Joyce, Lawrence, Wolfe, and Hemingway, Lowry wrote in exile, in Cuernavaca; he was divorced in 1939. The conditions of composition and the Everyman character place the novel in the mainstream of great modern novels, with the play of symbolism intended to raise the matter from the literal level of plot and action to the level of universal applicability and ritual.

Geoffrey Firmin is literally in a "damnable" situation: he is divorced; his consulate is closed; he cannot stop drinking. He is also damned by his own past actions: his inability to answer Yvonne's letters and the murder of German officers during an engagement for which he was awarded the D.S.O. He is also doomed by the actions of those around him: the affair between Laruelle and Yvonne, the hopeless dreams of Hugh. Every stage of his progress on the Day of the Dead—his reunion with Yvonne, his visit with Laruelle, the bus ride to Tomalín, his final encounter with the secret police at Parián—is an inexorable step in the chain of circumstances that draws him to the *barranca* and his death.

If these steps are viewed as part of the elaborate ritual of preparing a victim for sacrifice, the ritual itself is an attempt to purge the "imagination of disaster" with the "imagination of love," terms used by Lionel Trilling in discussing Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima*. The ritual exorcism fails to avert Geoffrey Firmin's fate, making *Under the Volcano* a compelling record of disaster and doom.

THE UNVANQUISHED

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: 1863-1874

Locale: Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi

First published: 1938

Principal characters:

BAYARD SARTORIS, a boy and later a young man
MISS ROSA MILLARD ("Granny"), Bayard's grandmother
COLONEL JOHN SARTORIS, Bayard's father
MARENGO SARTORIS ("Ringo"), Bayard's Negro playmate and servant
DRUSILLA HAWK, John Sartoris' cousin; later his wife
VIRGINIA SARTORIS DU PRE ("Aunt Jenny"), John Sartoris' widowed sister, Bayard's aunt
COLONEL DICK, commander of an Ohio regiment
AB SNOPEs, a horse and mule trader, and
MAJOR GRUMBY, a bushwhacker Southerner, the killers of Rosa Millard
BENJAMIN J. REDMOND, a Jefferson lawyer, at one time John Sartoris' railroad partner, later his killer

Most of William Faulkner's novels have an individual and unconventional form, but two share a common formal distinction: *Go Down, Moses* and *The Unvanquished* appear at first glance to be collections of short stories. The chronology in both, like that of the conventional novel, is strictly observed but the exact order of composition of the episodes, first published as separate short stories, has not been determined.

At least three stages appear to have occurred in creating the novel from the stories. First, Faulkner's imagination played freely on real and remembered incidents which became a set of anecdotes about the adventures of the Sartoris women and children during the Civil War. Next, these were arranged in order to provide a family chronicle from the moment the first Union troops appeared near Jefferson, with resulting disruption of Sartoris family life, until its tentative re-establishment at the Sartoris home during the Reconstruction. Last, the chronicle was given both the perspective and larger meaning a novel offers by writing a new story, "An Odor of Verbena," set some years later than the rest, in which the role of Bayard is clarified as "the unvanquished." This concluding story was necessary because there is no separate story or chapter so called in the book, though the story "Riposte in Tertio" originally bore that title. Five of the stories were published in chronological order in *The Saturday Evening Post* between September, 1934, and December, 1936; "Skir-

mish at Sartoris" appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* during that period. Very few changes in text were made between periodical and book publication. "An Odor of Verbena" was printed for the first time in the novel.

The Unvanquished is, therefore, an interesting example of how Faulkner could mine his Sartoris material for a number of anecdotes which, as they were gradually assembled, he shaped into a novel by writing a conclusion that would transfer the attention from Granny Millard (who with Ringo dominates the first four stories) to Bayard, who completed Granny's history in the fifth story. At the same time Faulkner explored the whole Southern code and in the new story he wrote came up with a different ending to the series of episodes. The imposition of this conclusion is Faulkner's clearest statement about the origins and foundations of the Southern code and this fact makes *The Unvanquished* not only the best introduction to his work and the earliest in the Yoknapatawpha saga, but also the most important to an understanding of all his writings.

At the start of the novel the "unvanquished" are three of the four recognized constituents of a Southern Civil War novel: Southern men, women, children, and Negroes: in turn the first two are vanquished not by the Union but by inherent weakness in the Southern code; the child grown into a man remains unvanquished by North or South; the Negro looks on and survives. Certain unify-

ing features bring out these distinctions. All seven stories or chapters are told in the first person by Bayard, so that the book could be considered a child's testament to the War; the setting is held to Jefferson as much as possible, but the homestead serves largely as a point of departure and return; even when the house has been burned to the ground the chimneys will not fall and the cabins are used for shelter. The events take place between the fall of Vicksburg in 1863, when Bayard is twelve, and 1874, when he is twenty-four. The first six stories, however, take place in the three years after the novel opens; "An Odor of Verbena," separated by more than time from the others, serves as an epilogue to the volume.

The progression of events leading to the last story is based on shootings and deaths; at the end of the fourth story, "Riposte in Tertio," Granny has been shot by Major Grumby, a renegade Southerner and leader of Grumby's Independents, with the apparent connivance of Ab Snopes, historically the first of the Snopes in Yoknapatawpha County. At the end of the fifth story, "Vendée," Grumby has been shot in revenge by Bayard; before the beginning of the last story Colonel Sartoris has been shot by Benjamin J. Redmond, his former partner in a railroad-building venture. The structure of the novel depends on a similar parallelism of characters, situations, and events, with the movement of the Union troops precipitating most of the action. Bayard, for example, is accompanied or paralleled by Ringo; the action of the first four stories is based on the struggle between Union troops and Confederate raiding parties, such as that of Colonel Sartoris, to hold or control Mississippi, but for every triumph of the former, the populace in that section of Mississippi, led by Granny Millard, score a victory over the invaders. When that struggle concludes another begins between Granny and the harsh conditions of the Reconstruction: her death at the

hands of Major Grumby and Ab Snopes causes the death of Grumby at the hands of Bayard and Ringo. A third struggle between the returned Southerners and the carpetbaggers begins in the sixth story, "Skirmish at Sartoris." The last confrontation, between Bayard and the Southern code, is the final story.

This is also a progression from the high comedy of the two boys, Bayard and Ringo, blindly shooting at Yankees in the first story, through the various shootings and killings until Bayard is grimly face to face with Redmond in the last story; Redmond, like Grumby, shoots twice at Bayard, misses, and leaves town. Bayard, unarmed, has brought the cycle of violence, initiated by his own act in shooting at the Yankees, to a Christian close. Accompanied by Ringo, escorted by the colonel's old troop, challenged by Drusilla, Bayard manages to withstand all these encouragements to violence, thus gaining the approval of his father's sister, Aunt Jenny Sartoris, who takes the place of dead Granny Millard as the voice of good conduct. Granny Millard was killed because she had been compelled to violate her own standards: in the first story, "Ambuscade," she lies to Colonel Dick to protect Bayard and Ringo; in the second, "Retreat," she swears as the Union troops burn the Sartoris house; in the third, "Raid," she steals from the Union troops by forging copies of the official order generous Colonel Dick gave her to make up for her original loss of slaves, mules, and silver. Her habit had been to punish the boys for such transgressions and she tried to keep up such a code of punishments, but at the end Bayard and Ringo were unable to stop her trying one last theft and lie. In the fourth story she meets worse liars and robbers in Ab Snopes and Grumby; to these crimes they add murder.

The accretion of parallel events and the final moral decision confronting Bayard—whether to shoot Redmond as Redmond shot his father—give the novel both epic and ethical dimensions. The

epic dimension is shown in the way Granny Millard comes to stand for all Southern womanhood fighting with wit and grit apparently overwhelming forces, and winning. Most of the exciting passages, such as the great river of freed slaves "going to Jordan" or the trailing of Major Grumby are associated with the epic of Granny Millard and Ringo, in which Bayard is largely a bystander. The ethical dimension comes from the three occasions on which Bayard handles a gun: first when he shoots at the Yankees; second, when he kills Grumby; third, when Drusilla presses on him the dueling pistols with which she intends he shall shoot Redmond. But greater than the courage of pistols is the courage of endurance, which must be the total meaning of the Civil War to the South. The power of the pistol failed, but the power to endure carried the South on. This latter power is represented as "the

odor of verbena," and in the last story so named Drusilla, the toughest battler of them all, comes to recognize that Bayard deserves this accolade.

Although Colonel Sartoris was eventually vanquished by Northern arms and even more by the triumph of total war as practiced by Sherman, and although Granny was eventually vanquished by the desire to loot, but for the highest and most unselfish motives, Bayard has been able to escape the fever of killing, break the chain of shootings, and in doing so offer a way of escape to the South and from the past. He could not do so without the example of Granny and his father. He is "unvanquished" because he did not allow the Southern code to negate the universal law against killing. The tragedy of the South, as Faulkner explores it in his work, is that it could not see that Bayard, the Christ-figure, had come to redeem the South from itself.

THE VELVET HORN

Type of work: Novel

Author: Andrew Lytle (1902-)

Time: August, 1879-April, 1880

Locale: The Peaks of Laurel, presumably in Tennessee

First published: 1957

Principal characters:

LUCIUS CREE (or LEGRAND), son of Julia Cree

JULIA CREE, nee CROPLEIGH, later JULIA LEGRAND

JOE CREE, Julia's husband and cousin, Lucius' father

JACK CROPLEIGH, Julia's older brother

BEVERLY CROPLEIGH, the oldest of the Cropoleighs

DUNCAN CROPLEIGH, Julia's youngest brother

AUNT AMELIE CROPLEIGH, Duncan's widow

PETER LEGRAND, Lucius' real father

EDDIE DUNBAUGH, kin to the Cropoleighs

FRANKIE DUNBAUGH, Eddie's wife

JEFF DUNBAUGH, the son of Eddie and Frankie

ADA RUTTER, a sharecropper's wife

ADA BELLE RUTTER, her older daughter, Lucius' wife

RUTHY RUTTER, her younger daughter, Jeff's wife

OTHEL RUTTER, her son

In Andrew Lytle's first book, *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company*, General Forrest became, in Lytle's hands, the symbol of the Mississippian South and its

best illumination, next to Lytle's "The Hind Tit," his essay in *I'll Take My Stand*, the manifesto of the Southern Agrarians. The passionate portrait of

primal simplicity in both works is fascinating and frustrating; the same reaction meets most of Lytle's work—certainly *The Velvet Horn*—and is probably the truest measure of the novelist.

The novel, dedicated to John Crowe Ransom, joins a distinguished company of works acknowledging his influence, and it is this Agrarian viewpoint which both attracts and repels in the novel. The lyrical description of the lost simplicity of the Garden summons up the old Adam in us all, only to make us reject the vanished vision when we raise our eyes from the page. In this novel, as in Faulkner's "The Bear," the Garden is the unspoiled forest, here the Wilderness and specifically the Peaks of Laurel. It comes equipped with game, cover, and water, even with a Cooperesque secret entrance through a waterfall. But this is only the starting point of the novel, the setting for the story of the Croleigh brothers and their sister Julia which precipitates years later the events that affect Julia's son, Lucius, the apparent hero. The Agrarian point of view is in the custody of the most impressive character, Uncle Jack Croleigh. The tension between the Agrarian base and the Reconstruction events is complicated by the poetic language in the lyrical description of the Wilderness life and by the twists of the interconnected plots. This is a highly wrought novel.

Although the simplistic Agrarian cosmos is shattered by the mercantilism of those who prospered in Reconstruction days and by the necessity for Lucius finally to make a living cutting virgin timber from the Wilderness, the difficulty of facing up to such a resolution is shown in the length and occasional turgidity of the novel. When the action becomes static the language becomes overwhelming, and there are several set scenes in which this sometimes happens, as in the first meeting between Ada Rutter and Jack Croleigh, or at Captain Cree's wake. Andrew Lytle's solution is to underwrite such set pieces with a current of tension derived from the plot or plots.

The first meeting with Ada Rutter, for instance, is tense because Uncle Jack is trying to drink the dwarf-child, Othel, under the table, to keep him from shooting Eddie Dunbaugh for watering his cattle on the Peaks of Laurel during the drought with which the novel opens in August 1879. This would give time to dig the well which Uncle Jack has already divined; but Eddie prefers to steal the water so that he can fornicate with Ruthy, Ada's younger daughter, who has also been seduced by Eddie's son Jeff. Eddie's wife, Frankie, knew what was keeping Eddie on the Peaks but did not foresee Jeff's interference. At Frankie's insistence Jack divined the well. The whole incident, the major portion of the first part, "The Peaks of Laurel," ends even more unexpectedly in the seduction of Lucius by Ada's older daughter, Ada Belle Rutter.

Lucius had originally been called away by his mother from helping his father cut Aunt Amelie's timber tract to drag Uncle Jack up the Peaks and thus help out Cousin Frankie, and incidentally Eddie. Worst of all, news of the event with which the novel opens, the apparently accidental death of Captain Cree under the falling white-oak tree, finally reaches Lucius at the Peaks and he returns to his father's funeral on the day he becomes eighteen. Such complexity of event is achieved by a number of flashbacks which carry the story back to two earlier events in the history of the Croleighs, the family that dominates the novel. When Jack was eighteen his mother and father were blown up in a steamboat explosion, leaving the four Croleigh boys and little Julia under the guardianship of their cousin, Joe Cree. Some eight years later when the youngest boy, Duncan, is almost eighteen the last hunt is held on the Big Meadow at the Peaks of Laurel before Peter Legrand turns it to plow. In those eight years Beverly, the oldest brother, and Duncan had taken to the forest, often accompanied by Julia, leaving Jack to run the farm and put a younger

brother through medical college. During the hunt Julia and Legrand find the secret entrance to Beverly's game sanctuary and sleep together. When the Croleigh brothers find them, Duncan knifes Legrand, the medical brother sews him up, and the others marry Julia smartly to Joe Cree. Lucius arrives nine months later in August, 1861.

This deception haunts the events of the novel and is complicated by two further developments. During the Civil War Duncan and Beverly kill each other in blowing up the secret entrance and Duncan's widow, Amelie, vows long revenge against Joe Cree, as the captain of their troop, for sending Duncan to his death. She has to wait until 1879 when Cree in financial desperation agrees to cut her timber tract under nearly impossible conditions. When it looks as if he may succeed, Aunt Amelie springs her trap and tells him about Lucius; Cree walks under the tree. When Lucius takes over his father's contract she tells him the same news—that he is really Lucius Legrand; then she hands him the deed to the timber tract to make his fortune. The deed is made out to Lucius Cree.

Although this is the barest outline of the main plot, it is obvious that it bears a remarkable similarity to the Victorian melodrama that unravels the parentage of the foundling and leaves him secure in his fortune. The resemblance comes from the family feuding involved. Of the principal characters, leaving aside faithful retainers who play a considerable role in the embellishment of this story, all but one belong to one of three families, the Croleighs, Dunbaughs, and Rutters. The outsider is Peter Legrand, whose story is told largely in the third part, "The Passionate Husk"; it is he who marries Julia and finances Lucius in the timber business. The Dunbaughs are related to the Croleighs and Cree's (who form one family) but serve mainly to pry Lucius away into the hands of Ada Rutter, an awful and portentous character whose full evil is seen only at the end of the

novel. The Rutters are, in two senses, what their name implies, sharecroppers who rut the land, and women who behave as expected. In the last part of the novel, "The Night Sea Journey," the Rutters and Dunbaughs change situations, the former taking the place of the latter at the tollgate and the Dunbaughs retiring to farm the Peaks. When Ada sees that Lucius knows his parentage, a secret she guessed long ago, she presses home her advantage, Lucius abducts Ada Belle, marries her, and returns to Uncle Jack for help. To them enter both Julia and Ada Rutter, accompanied by menacing Othel, who shoots Uncle Jack while aiming at Lucius. Although Uncle Jack tries to sum up in a dying speech some sort of meaning from the whole affair, it is not clear what the novel is really saying. The tension between Beverly's mode as "keeper" or maintainer of the Wilderness and Legrand as the "husk" of progress is resolved in the latter's favor and apparently to the author's displeasure.

A possible source of enlightenment is found in the rhetoric and the poetry of the speeches, of which, since the book is mostly in direct speech or unspoken thought, there is an abundance. The most obvious feature, apart from Jack's astoundingly free associations is the symbolism. The velvet horn, in view of Lucius' experiences with Ada Belle and Aunt Amelie, is comprehensible, but it also refers to the unicorn Jack thinks he sees during Captain Cree's wake.

The falling white-oak tree is not necessarily symbolically related to Lucius' fall with Ada Belle; it seems to enclose the action of the plot, for at the end of the novel Lucius is to live in a house built of the planks of the tree that killed his father. Other symbols dominate the sections of the novel, generally aspects of nature such as the drought with which the novel opens and the flood with which it closes.

Neither Lucius nor Julia seems to come alive, but we are meant to sympathize with the boy and therefore possibly

favor the denouement. Uncle Jack and several minor characters dominate the novel, yet lose out to Legrand. It is possible that this is more a *roman à thèse*

than appears on the surface and only placing it in its full Agrarian context would illuminate its meaning.

THE VICTIM

Type of work: Novel

Author: Saul Bellow (1915-)

Time: Several weeks during a hot summer in the recent past

Locale: New York City

First published: 1947

Principal characters:

ASA LEVENTHAL, the protagonist

MARY, Leventhal's wife

MAX, Leventhal's brother

ELENA, Leventhal's sister-in-law, Max's wife

PHILIP, Elena's elder son, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old

MICKEY, Elena's younger son, eight or nine years old

KIRBY ALLBEE, an acquaintance who plagues Leventhal by forcing him to examine the meaning of certain events in his life

DANIEL HARKAVY, Leventhal's friend

STAN WILLISTON, Allbee's friend

Like all good fiction, the novels of Saul Bellow are founded upon solidity of character, authenticity of event. This is not to say that they are always realistic; obviously the Africa of *Henderson the Rain King* is to be found nowhere beyond the boundaries of Bellow's imagination. But people, places, and events in these novels have an intensity of presence that forces them upon the reader's senses, causes them to lodge in his memory. Despite the elements of fantasy, the peculiar twists of character, the disquieting failures of modulation (the excessive agonizing, for instance, of some of the early works), there is never in Bellow's fiction an air of contrivance. This last, however, can be said of a number of writers of lesser stature. The distinguishing quality that gives these works their unique pressure is their depth of moral implication. Many writers are interested in moral issues, but few are able to enter that awesome territory of confusion and paradox in which moral concern can have its only real trial. In a world where the consequences of an act are severed from its motive, Bellow's characters seek, often

unconsciously, for a mode of behavior that will restore the link, bind intention to effect, and thus create the possibility of moral choice—or at least of potency. But instead of issues, which at least would be clear in their terms, they face a confusion, a turmoil, a darkness noisy with unforeseeable moral collisions.

For Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of *The Victim*, the question of a man's responsibility for his actions is personal, immediate, painful, as insistent as a wound. It is, in fact, hardly a question at all but rather a pathology, something to be healed more than answered. On the one hand he is plagued by a sense of persecution, a conviction that others are consciously and deliberately responsible for his sufferings, that society is joined in a total effort to exclude him from its graces. On the other he is infected with an increasing sense of culpability by the woes of those around him. And his condition is aggravated by an inability to measure either his virtue or his potency. Though afflicted by an image of himself as inconsequential, a reject destined to dwell forever on the fringes of possibility, Leven-

thal nevertheless has a megaloid streak: he fears his own powers, sees himself as a man who cannot budge without visiting disaster upon his fellows.

Involved in Leventhal's consciousness of himself are three areas of action. First there is his past, presented retrospectively in the novel. It is from the shocks of this personal history that his tenuous relation to the present derives. His mother having died in an insane asylum when he was eight, Leventhal, after finishing high school, left Hartford and went to New York where he worked as the assistant to an auctioneer. When the auctioneer died, he lost the job and began to drift, living in a dirty room on the lower East Side, working at odd jobs. The job that affected him most was a clerking position in a flophouse on lower Broadway, the ruined and outcast transients representing for him a condition that was a constant threat in his own life. After several years of this borderline existence, he took a civil service job in Baltimore, where he found a girl and became engaged, an event that promised to ameliorate his fears. But he was fated to suffer shock and delay before his marriage could come into being with any degree of security. Though he had in effect rediscovered his mother—this time young, attractive, eminently sane—in the person of his betrothed, he found that she had continued, during the engagement, a lingering affair with a married man. The result was immediate trauma and several years of separation before they finally married.

The crucial elements in that history, all reflected in his present phobic sense of being, are insanity, infidelity, poverty. Together these represent for him the ingredients of disaster in his relations with the world. The threat of insanity, a heritage from his mother, is in effect a threat of lost control, that state in which he may unintentionally bring harm to others. It evokes fears of personal irresponsibility, of the arbitrary, the disordered, the perilous within the self. Infidelity implies the antithesis of this: deception by others,

the conscious attempts of the world to smash personal defenses. Finally there is poverty, the potential effect of aimless forces, accidents of circumstance which seem always to Leventhal to exert a downward pressure, a thrust toward calamity. He sees himself as perpetually at the point where all these possibilities intersect. Everywhere, within, and beyond the shell of his being, is peril.

In the present time of the novel Leventhal's frighteningly delicate condition is further elaborated through two involved situations, one happening at a distance, the other up so close that it is as much a manifestation of his frenzied consciousness as of realistic circumstance. His wife having gone to Maryland for several weeks to visit her mother, he is thrown into a period of isolation in the oppressive heart of New York, the stifling solitude of their Manhattan apartment, the opiate routine of his job on a trade paper. His sister-in-law on Staten Island, desperately worried during this time over the sickness of her younger boy, makes repeated demands upon Leventhal's attention, and he finds himself impelled to take on the emotional responsibilities of his brother, who has left his family in order to work somewhere in the West. Simultaneously, he is visited again and again in his apartment by an old acquaintance, Kirby Allbee, who accuses him of having wrecked Allbee's life. Like the heat, these oppressions are constant, debilitating, disorienting.

Whereas Allbee's visits seem almost unreal, the hallucinations of a lonely mind, the events in Staten Island are in no important sense projections of his fear but disturbing occasions in the world beyond. His sister-in-law, an Italian, is a woman with alien responses. Fearing hospitals, she resists sending her child to one despite the seriousness of his condition. Thus she is, for Leventhal, an outsider, a stranger dwelling in a different set of attitudes, a different locale of consciousness. All strangers signify to Leventhal's paranoid spirit an accusation, a

proclamation of his difference and therefore his error and guilt. When her child dies in a hospital to which Leventhal has urged her to commit him, this sense of accusation oppresses him despite the absence of vindictiveness, of any charge from his sister-in-law. A victim of outer circumstance and inward predilection, Leventhal stands accused of the sins, the enormities, of chance.

It is in the central situation of the book, the encounters with Allbee, an experience at once literal and fantastic, that the ordeals of Leventhal's conscience are most strikingly elaborated. Allbee, his accuser, is the personification of everything that Leventhal is oppressed by. Shabby, penniless, half-deranged, he evokes images of all those broken creatures in the flophouse of Leventhal's past. Allbee's accusations—that Leventhal had lost him his job by being rude to his employer, had thereby indirectly caused his wife to leave him, was even somehow responsible for the death of that wife in an automobile accident—are like dream representations of the vague but deep-seated guilt dragging constantly at Leventhal's life. Despite Leventhal's confused attempts to remove this specter from his consciousness as well as from his presence, Allbee presses closer, forcing a kind of intimacy that fuses the two in a grim relationship of hatred and compassion. Prevailing upon Leventhal to let him move into the apartment, he takes to wearing Leventhal's robes, to reading postcards from Leventhal's wife on which are intimate references to details of their sex life, even brings a woman into Leventhal's bed and

locks his harried host from the apartment. It is as though he has taken Leventhal's wife and is absorbing his existence. The result of this strange pattern of circumstances is that Leventhal, victimized, driven, tormented by Allbee's transgressions, finally comes to acknowledge his own complicity in his tormentor's plight. However inadvertently, he had initiated the chain of events that led to Allbee's disintegration. Allbee, his tormentor, is his victim.

In the end the increasing fusion of identities, Allbee's complete failure to distinguish between himself and his surrogate, brings the erratic relationship to a conclusion. When Allbee attempts suicide by turning on the gas in the middle of the night, an act that will of course destroy Leventhal as well as himself, Leventhal drives him from the apartment and shuts him from his life. Through the experience with Allbee he seems to have sensed not only the necessity of recognizing one's part in the trials of his fellows, but the near madness of that lingering self-renunciation which obliterates the borders of identity. To be totally victimized by the sense that one has victimized others is to bring ruin not only upon the self but upon one's victims as well. When Leventhal encounters a somewhat regenerated Allbee several years later, this implicit lesson is reinforced by the happier circumstances of each. Though no man is an island, neither is mankind an indivisible continent. Unchartable, the topography of human relation is a paradox as deep as time.

THE VIOLENT BEAR IT AWAY

Type of work: Novel

Author: Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

Time: 1952

Locale: Tennessee

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

FRANCIS MARION TARWATER, a fourteen-year-old trained to be a prophet
MASON TARWATER, his great-uncle, a mad religious fanatic

GEORGE F. RAYBER, the boy's uncle
BISHOP RAYBER, George's idiot son
BERNICE BISHOP RAYBER, George's wife
BUFORD MUNSON, a Negro farmer
MEEKS, a copper flue salesman

The gifted author of *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* displays in this novel some of the same qualities that made the short stories of that volume so memorable: a sharp eye and ear, a dazzling combination of the humorous with the macabre and grotesque, and profound interest in the inner lives of men, women, and children. The surface of her prose is deceptively easy, straightforward, and simple-seeming. Actually, she is a deft handler of the flashback, the indirect interior monologue, and the matter-of-fact presentation of the strange and bizarre which, at its best, suggests the technique of Franz Kafka.

Printed large across the title pages of the novel is the passage from Matthew, XI:12, from which the title is taken: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." This much-interpreted passage has meant to some that violence has been done to the kingdom in the form of that meted out to its members; to others it has meant that only to those former sinners such as harlots and tax-gatherers, whose vociferous acceptance of redemption caused the righteous to exclude them, would the kingdom in fact be opened. The intent of the novel seems closer to the first interpretation than the second, for here violence and fanaticism triumph, and love and understanding are defeated.

The novel follows fourteen-year-old Francis Marion Tarwater as he flees from his home, ventures out into the big world, is tried in soul and mind, and returns briefly to his home to prepare for his special mission in life. The reader would be wrong to assume this is another adolescent like Huckleberry Finn or Holden Caulfield, although like them he is deprived of parental love and forced to

make his way in an adult world he never made. Unlike them, he is a murderer. The son of a tramp and foster son of a madman, he can neither make his way toward maturity, as does Huck, nor give love to the world that torments him, as does Holden.

The figure looming almost larger than the protagonist is that of Mason Tarwater, Francis Marion Tarwater's eighty-four-year-old great-uncle, whose death is announced in the novel's first sentence. His baleful influence on the boy is made clear in the flashbacks which describe their life together from the time, fourteen years before, when Mason Tarwater had abducted him from George R. Rayber, the old man's school-teacher nephew, himself the uncle of the boy. The old man works the land on his remote farm to provide an abundant diet for himself and his great-nephew, but farming is not his chief concern. He is a self-styled and self-anointed prophet who, when the spirit comes upon him, speaks in tongues, prophesying to the wicked the intent of the Lord and the events which He will cause to come to pass.

Mason Tarwater's influence persists after his death, and the central and final portions of the book recount the struggle of Rayber to counteract it. Himself twisted by the fanatic indoctrination imposed upon him in childhood by the old man, Rayber hopes to help the boy to find freedom but at a lesser cost than his own years of struggle. But Francis Marion Tarwater fights him, fiercely resentful of any attempt to shape or guide him, repeating the saws and phrases of his great-uncle. Ironically, Rayber is still suffering from the influence of Mason Tarwater. Listening to the exhortations of a crippled child preaching in a squalid tabernacle as her missionary parents look

on, he dreams of sheltering all the exploited children of the world in a hidden garden where their minds would be open to sunshine and truth. But Rayber resists the lingering effects of the old man's conditioning, and he uses all the persistence and tact he can to muster to induce the difficult boy to do the same. Intent on doing it in his own way, the boy fiercely resists almost all the attempts Rayber makes.

The climactic action of the novel centers around a character who seems as symbolic, as much a judgment upon his family, as does Benjy Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. It is Bishop Rayber, for this strange child, like Benjy, is an idiot. Abandoned by his social-worker mother, he is cared for by his father, who, in his intense love for the boy, alternately feels that he should perform a mercy killing and that he would be unable to go on living if he did. Rayber has always refused to baptize the child, saying that this is one travesty he will not perform. Before his death, Mason Tarwater has charged Francis Marion with this responsibility. A sensible, kind, and rational voice within the boy tells him that if he can resist the desire to complete this act, he will be able to free himself from the twisting and misshaping spirit of the old man. Rayber tells him the same thing. Exhausted and at the end of the tether, Rayber allows Francis Marion to take Bishop for a boat ride on the

lake in the gathering darkness. There Francis Marion baptizes him, but when Rayber hears Bishop's bellows (the same word Faulkner uses for Benjy) he realizes that Francis Marion has followed the first ritual act with a second: he has drowned Bishop.

At the end of the novel the boy returns to the isolated farm where the charred remains of the house he burned still stand. He touches a flaming branch to bushes and trees as he goes. Then, awaiting a sign or portent, he looks back to see a tree of fire behind him; he knows that it is the fire which protected Daniel, lifted Elijah to glory, and spoke to Moses from the burning bush. Lying on his great-uncle's grave, he hears a command telling him to warn God's children that mercy is terrible and swift. He sets out for the dark, sleeping city to carry this message of terror and love.

The Violent Bear It Away, so permeated with the grotesque and the macabre, has numerous flashes of humor deriving from acute observation of human crochets and even from speech patters, particularly those of the boy and his great-uncle, who place much store upon—among other things—minding one's own "bidnis." But its most powerful effect comes from its examination of the impulses of religion and of love, and the strange and terrible forms which they can assume.

THE VOICES OF SILENCE

Type of work: Art history and criticism

Author: André Malraux (1901-)

First published: 1951

"Museum Without Walls," the first of the four principal sections of *The Voices of Silence*, defines the two crucial developments of the past one hundred years which have given rise to a new concept of art. These two factors, which permit twentieth century man to inherit the cultures of the past and to assess the art of

these cultures with a new vision, are the advent of photography, which made world art accessible to everyone, and the eclipse by modern art of an aesthetic ideal which prevailed from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth.

Thanks to photographic reproductions, the student, connoisseur, or critic is no

longer limited in his exploration of the artistic world by the confines of an art gallery; he can now open an art book and examine Greek vase paintings, pre-Columbian sculpture, Romanesque frescoes, Byzantine folk art, Mayan bas-reliefs, as well as a profusion of paintings and statues by the accepted masters. This exposure to world art entails a revision of values: miniatures, decorative reliefs on pillars, tapestries, stained glass, and coins are isolated and enlarged in reproduction and thus invite comparison with canvases and sculpture. Moreover, in separating works from their original context, the "museum without walls" forces them to undergo a metamorphosis; a piece of Gothic statuary found in a book is no longer an integral part of a cathedral; it offers itself as a single entity divorced from the limitations of time and place and stands as a possible rival to a work as radically different in origin as a Japanese twelfth century portrait. By placing together in the same art book hundreds of works representative of the same style, the "museum without walls" alters in another way our scale of values: the assembling of such an anthology brings about a re-evaluation of the masterpieces of a given period or culture and leads to a clearer perception of the significance of man implicit in that particular style. Because of these changes in the hierarchy of values brought about by the proliferation of reproductions of art, the approach to art in this century has become more and more intellectual, more and more oriented by the desire to explain man and his destiny through examination of the artistic expressions of diverse cultures.

In addition, a new perspective has been gained in viewing the multitudinous and multifarious art productions of the past as a result of the demise of an aesthetic ideal which held sway over artists for the time of Leonardo Da Vinci to the nineteenth century. Da Vinci modified the realm of painting by discovering and disseminating the secret of rendering perspective on canvas. The new canon

enthusiastically embraced by painters who followed him was to create an illusion of reality, to depict an idealized world of harmonious beauty. The supreme value of art was placed in the quest for rational beauty, an objective consecrated as the attainment of an eternal style. Painters ceased groping for new modes of expression and conformed to a preconceived idea of painting; consequently, interest became more and more centered on the subject of the work rather than on problems of creation. If Vermeer, El Greco, Piero della Francesca, and certain others are singled out of this period and resurrected today, it is principally due to the influence of modern art. Foreshadowed by Goya and announced by Manet, the revolution of modern art forced the viewer's attention, not upon the subject portrayed, but upon the presence of the painter; it destroyed the notion of an eternal style pressed into the service of an imagined scene containing a religious, historical, or sentimental narrative. Painters like Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin asserted the primacy of the painter over the subject, and the primordial aim of painting was no longer one of representing and embellishing reality, but one of annexing and dominating the outer world through a personal style. This rupture with descriptive and imaginary art permits a fresh look at the art of all ages because the enormous variety of individual styles entails a rejection of all values except that of the world transmuted into the private universe of the artist. The modern viewer is prepared to accept the art of mankind as a succession of efforts to change forms into style, to defy and re-create the world.

Part Two, entitled "The Metamorphoses of Apollo," is a demonstration of Malraux's thesis that style, far from being the totality of characteristics which reflect a common school or period, is the language of an artist bent upon transmitting both the raw material of living forms and the styles which he inherits. Malraux traces the Greek style as it moved into the Far

East, then into Byzantium, and finally into Europe. In each new surrounding it is conquered by some other style; each time it encounters a culture which reflects a different meaning of man, the Greek style is metamorphosed. Thus, for example, the posture of immobile meditation cultivated by the Buddhist governs the creation of the Buddhist sculptor when he confronts the Apollonian nude; he retains the head of the nude but all movement of the body is eliminated. There is an element of stimulation and an element of destruction present in each stage of a style's progress through history; progress implies conquest of previous styles by new ones and art is envisaged as the continuous quest for a style.

Malroux expands the idea that the artist is a conqueror in "The Creative Process," the third part of his work. Here the matter of the artist's vocation and his relation to other creators and to the world around him is treated. For Malroux, genius is not to be explained by reference to exceptional vision, to unique instincts, to heightened sensitivity; it breaks to the surface as the result of a tension created within a budding artist who has been thoroughly exposed to specific works of his predecessors. A painter opts for his vocation because of a painting he once saw. His quest for a personal style is born of an admiration for a previous style and evolves to the need to vanquish the earlier mode of expression which influenced him. Every great artist begins with the pastiche—imitation of contemporary masters—and advances to a point where he feels compelled to dominate this inherited world of forms through his own selection and invention. In forging his own style he may rely upon styles of a much earlier period, or the direction he takes may well be guided by his study of living forms in the world around him. In the latter case he selects and annexes certain elements in reality which allow him to rival and surpass the artists who have influenced him. Segments of the outer world thus become re-created and con-

quered as the artist pursues his search for a style. Once he has mastered the technical aspects of his medium and experienced the urge to challenge existing pictures, he begins to offer glimpses of his individuality on canvas; he isolates and amplifies these individual elements (e.g., Rembrandt's ray of sun illuminating a room, Van Gogh's swirling movements, Cézanne's architectural composition) until a true personal style emerges. With the appearance of a fresh plastic interpretation of the world, the artist feels liberated from his masters and victorious over that portion of reality upon which he has imposed his talent.

Art is regarded as the conquest of one world of forms, by another, and the unflagging pace of its movement through time attests to the human power of creation and, more importantly, to man's eternal revenge over his destiny. It is this elevating aspect of art which Malroux elaborates upon in the last section of his book, "Aftermath of the Absolute." If art in the twentieth century appears as a substitute for an absolute, the chief reason is that contemporary culture is agnostic and anxiety-ridden. Tormented by absurdities which crush us—old age, death, and the violent fatalities of history—we no longer have the comforting resource of a living religion which would ease the burden of our fate by bringing us into an immense communion with all men who suffer. We struggle with demons who have made their reappearance in the modern world and the artist's acceptance of this situation explains his interest in primitive art, in the art of children, and in the art of the insane. These domains reflect often a combat with demons and a total expression of freedom—an effort to subdue destiny by annexing it.

Every great artistic expression is a response to the threat of the blind forces of fate and this is the reason why Malroux is particularly disdainful of the arts of delectation which cater to gratification of the senses and the desire for illusion. These arts eschew the problem of man's

significance. In Greece and in Renaissance Europe men were in harmony with their gods, and the sculpture and painting of these civilizations transmit a meaning of man which has as strong an appeal for our present generation as the art of the so-called "savages." Both reveal a communion more vast than a living religion, a communion of men belonging to varied and distant cultures who are linked by their noble attempts to resist destiny. These responses to man's fate which proliferate in our "museums with-

out walls" and which can now be judged in the light of values introduced by modern art, instill in us an awareness of the first universal humanism in history. We find ourselves united with the efforts of the past to reduce the universe to a human scale. In a world dominated by the inhuman—chaos, atrocities, and death—the language of the artist is the language of a conqueror who reflects the noblest part of man in his revolt against destiny.

THE WANING OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Type of work: Cultural history
Author: Johan Huizinga (1872-1945)
First published: 1919

Johan Huizinga taught at the University of Leiden from 1915 until it was closed during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, subtitled *A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, which was first published in 1919 and translated into English in 1924, became a classic of scholarship during the author's lifetime. Three other works of Huizinga have been translated into English: *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, *In the Shadow of Tomorrow*, and *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*.

In his Preface to *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Johan Huizinga suggests that the decay of a culture may be as suggestive as the birth of a new era. The twilight of a civilization, he observes, may present more distinctly than earlier periods, in all its forms of life, the heart and mind and soul—the spirit—of an age. Huizinga focuses his study on France and the Netherlands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a time and place where the tone of life had not yet been altered by the humanism flourishing in Italy. The quality of life which he delineates, though it is limited to two countries and two centuries, captures the es-

sence of medievalism.

Life in the Middle Ages was violent, passionate, and paradoxical. Everyday existence oscillated between grief and joy, cruelty and tenderness. Religious processions in the fifteenth century attracted crowds of people who reacted to the ceremonies with tears of devotion. On the other hand, the common people responded with appalling enthusiasm and excitement to the brutal punishments which the law devised for terrible crimes. The quality of mercy was often conspicuously lacking. For example, in Paris in the early fifteenth century, a noble brigand, about to be executed, was not allowed the privilege of confession. The treasurer of the Regent, disregarding the pleas of the doomed man, climbed the ladder behind him, beat him with a stick, and thrashed the hangman for exhorting the victim to think of his salvation. The same paradoxical emotional responses are reflected in the medieval attitude toward the sick, the poor, and the insane, who are regarded with either deep compassion or cruel derision.

The emotional violence that makes up an integral part of the spirit of the Middle Ages was, to a certain extent, responsible for another significant medieval element: formalism. All emotions, Hui-

zinga points out, needed a rigid framework of conventions; otherwise the feverish passions of the day would have made havoc of existence. Birth, marriage, and death became, in effect, ceremonious spectacles. Outside these spheres a deeply felt desire for beauty and order shaped a solemn and decorous form for every important event. The sinner who humbled himself, the condemned prisoner who repented, and the religious person who sacrificed himself made up part of what might be called the public spectacle. Thus public life almost presented the appearance of a perpetual moral drama. These and other conventions, such as those which dignified the intimate relationships of love and friendship, helped to mask or at least partially to obscure the barbaric cruelty and crudeness that were so close to the surface of medieval life.

Another institution which contributed to this attempt to elevate life was chivalry. Huizinga takes issue with those modern historians who minimize the significance of chivalry by seeing it only as a very special product of medieval civilization which had a minor influence on the political and social development of the era. To know the spirit of the Middle Ages, he maintains, one cannot ignore the illusions of the age. For nobility and feudalism had a significant influence on the mind of the age long after they had ceased to be significant factors in the state and in society. Chivalry was regarded as the basis of the whole hierarchic social system designed by God, and its ideals reflected in theory the ideals of the class appointed by God to direct human society. Though the chroniclers who recorded the history of the time write more of selfishness and cruelty than of these ideals, they continue, in the main, to regard chivalry as the stay of the world. For it was through this concept that they were able to explain to their own satisfaction the confusing course of politics and history. Since they were unable to conceive of the prospect of social and economic evolution, they read the

events of their time as a spectacle which celebrated the honor of princes and the virtues of knights, as in a noble, heroic, and edifying game. The extravagant views which comprise chivalry, as Huizinga indicates, were a response to the needs of a civilization struggling to escape the chaos of barbarism. The ferocious soul of the Middle Ages could be tamed only if it were directed by impossible ideals.

As an institution ordained by God, chivalry contained the religious qualities of compassion, fidelity, and justice; but its primary aesthetic value was derived from the role of love in the life of the knight. Furthermore, the religious traits which comprise such an important part of the chivalrous ideal were erotic as well as religious. In life, as well as in art and literature, love continually sought a refined romantic expression. The knight who served his lady desired to show the quality of his love in ways which suggested the ideals of Christianity. His sensuality was sublimated into the desire to sacrifice himself and suffer for the sake of his love.

The more cruel and coarse an age is, Huizinga states, the greater the need to formalize love as a reflection of a sublime life. In the Middle Ages love had to be elevated into a rite. The overflowing violence of passion demanded it. Literature, social ritual, and conversation, by regulating and refining erotic life, presented the appearance of a virtuous life of courtly love. In reality, however, the sexual life of the higher classes was surprisingly rude. One encounters in the chronicle examples of extreme indecency along with descriptions of a formalism that borders on prudery. The literary work which helped to shape the aristocratic conception of love in the latter part of the Middle Ages and which reflects its dual nature is the *Roman de la Rose*. It was begun before 1240 by Guillaume de Lorris and completed before 1280 by Jean Chopinel, two writers whose attitudes toward love were quite different. The re-

sult is a juxtaposition of the courtly conception of love and a daring sensual cynicism.

One element of medieval life which was not sublimated or masked in any way was the concept of death. As the age approached its own end, its mind was obsessed with the perishable nature of all things. Sermons and woodcuts nourished this idea through three themes: the *ubi-sunt* motif, the decay of beauty theme, and the dance of death. In the latter two may be found the macabre element which is at the heart of the late medieval vision of death. These themes reflect an attitude which is essentially narrow and selfish; they are designed primarily to intensify the shudder of fear which the individual experiences when he contemplates the brute physical facts of his own impending dissolution. The medieval mind, Huizinga asserts, felt the divine

depth of unselfish sorrow only in connection with the Passion of Christ. The emotional response to death was stiffened by the imagery of skeletons and worms.

The religious life at the end of the Middle Ages deteriorated as a result of the saturation of the religious atmosphere. The proliferation of saints, festivals, and holy days; the tendency to blend the holy and the profane; the conversion of the mysteries of religion into everyday terms—these things drained Christianity of much of its force. When religion lost some of the awe which it had commanded, the result was often superficial piety or contempt. Nevertheless, Huizinga observes, one still finds, even in the midst of debauchery or complacency, evidence that a truly religious current remained and could, on occasion, be aroused.

THE WAPSHOT CHRONICLE

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Cheever (1912-)

Time: The 1890's to the present

Locale: St. Botolphs, Massachusetts, Washington, New York, a rocket-launching station

First published: 1957

Principal characters:

LEANDER WAPSHOT, Yankee skeptic, philosopher, and skipper of the launch *Topaze*

SARAH WAPSHOT, his brisk, practical wife

MOSES and

COVERLY, their sons

MELISSA, the wife of Moses

BETSEY, the wife of Coverly

HONORA WAPSHOT, a wealthy cousin and the family matriarch

JUSTINA WAPSHOT MOLESWORTH SCADDON, another wealthy cousin

ROSALIE, a wanton

The Wapshot Chronicle is a novel created wholly in its own image and nothing else; therefore it is to be apprehended only in terms of its innocent ribaldry, sad knowledge, and comic invention. But the secret of the book's appeal and power is something each reader must decide for himself. For some the work will take shape as a pungent regional narrative,

richly flavored with the oddities of New England life and character. Others will read it as a rueful lament for an uncramped way of life rapidly disappearing from the American scene. Many readers will undoubtedly view it as a bright comedy of manners. Still others will relish John Cheever's lively satire on a variety of topics, among them bossy old women,

the social brutality of the very rich, and psychology's invasion of personal privacy in modern industry.

Beneath and beyond these matters, however, is the functioning of the author's wryly comic point of view. Like a number of his contemporaries who deserve to be called serious writers, John Cheever chooses to cast his fiction in the mold of comedy. In fact, the continuing presence of the comic spirit in the novels of the 1950's and later is a sign that a literary movement of sorts is under way. In no sense, however, are these writers to be thought of as a school, as that term is used in literary history and criticism. At the same time, collectively, they suggest that the comic vision may be the best angle from which to view the existential concerns, hostile realities, and moral ambiguities of the world we live in today. (It was Kierkegaard who said that the humorous interpretation is always the final one.) Tragedy instructs us in the nature of death, the Dionysian, fated end of man; but in a world darkly overshadowed by threats of violence and disaster tragedy has lost much of the meaning and force it held in earlier, more ordered times. Comedy, on the other hand, consoles us with the grace of innocence and the power of love for the cold fact of our mortality. This is its function in Cheever's novels and short stories where the comic vision is largely of a conditioning order, mediating between a quality of truth that life reveals and a quality of the imagination at work reshaping the familiar world into something strange and new.

Used in this manner, the comic mode serves Cheever's purposes admirably. As a picture of the way we live today, *The Wapshot Chronicle* is witty, sad, whimsical, outrageous, fantastic, rich in its flow of invention. As a novel, it is episodic, relaxed, modestly proportioned but generous in implication, precisely styled. Plainly, here is a writer with little patience for the closed point of view or the closed structure of the well-made novel.

He works within an open form giving him greater opportunities for improvisation, relevance beyond mere reporting, and easy accommodation to the eccentric or the grotesque in human character and conduct. This freedom allows him to write about almost everything that falls within the scope of his observation, imagination, and talent. His effects are unpredictable. A situation may begin on a level of earthy realism and then turn aside into a region of pure comedy overshadowed by fantasy. Fragments of myth as well as suggestions of the supernatural turn up in the most unexpected places. These matters are interesting in themselves as qualities of vision or devices of technique, but they do not explain Cheever's special power as a writer. That comes from the broader human significance achieved in his work by joining two forces usually not found together: an upward thrust of joy in man's fruitfulness, the promise of his continuity, and a sense of moral structure in the universe. His people are all veterans of the ancient conflict between spirit and flesh. In their efforts to define themselves, to communicate with one another, to find some road back into a past of innocence and promise, to face the future, they stand or fall simply because they are human, as vulnerable to the blunders, absurdities, lusts, and cruelties of mankind as they are capable of goodness and compassion and grave commitment to life's portion of delight or dismay. In John Cheever we confront a moralist.

On still another level *The Wapshot Chronicle* is a delicate probing into the anatomy of love. For Cheever's people are also possessed by love in most of its forms and occasions: love of place, of the fireside and the hearth, of the ties of kinship; carnal love, the stirrings of the Old Adam to plague and goad human flesh; love that is gentle and good, asking nothing except the simple joy of giving; love that is protective and kind; love of the ancestral past, of the living for the dead;

love that can be funny or hopeless or perverted or cruel. It is plain that to Cheever the capacity to love and be loved helps to compensate man for his mortality; it is the bridge on which he keeps his precarious balance between the mysteries of birth and death. In this story of Leander Wapshot and his sons the ordinary routines of living and private fantasies of desire combine to convey a sense of generations passing and to celebrate in man's fruitfulness the promise of continuance.

The story is presented through a series of loosely threaded episodes that sometimes give the impression of being unrelated but which have been cunningly devised for juxtaposed or contrapuntal effect.

One may begin, as Cheever does, with the place. St. Botolphs had been a bustling, prosperous river port in the days of the Massachusetts clipper fleets. Now it is kept alive by a few small industries and summer visitors, a moribund port town replaced by a tourist center of antique stores, gift shops, and tea rooms quaintly decorated by the handcrafted artifacts of an older seafaring and agricultural America.

Leander's home, West Farm, cluttered like an old attic with the memories and the possessions of dead and gone Wapshots, is another image of a good past and an uncertain present. For the Wapshots, like the village, have come down in the world. The older generations of the family had been seafaring wanderers in their youth, and they had come back to St. Botolphs with their manhood seasoned by the hardships and perils of their calling, with wits sharpened by the strategies of trade in foreign ports, with memories of lovely, naked brown girls in the islands of the Pacific. But Leander had never known adventure in far places or a sultry paradise of love. Failing fortunes and changing times had beached him inland, spiritual castaway on the shores of Wapshot tradition and a dependent on Cousin Honora's charity.

Nominally he is the head of the fam-

ily, but the real power is Cousin Honora, a matriarch who speaks and acts with the authority of one who holds the purse strings. In her eccentric way she regards Leander and herself as the holders of a family trust, Leander because he has fathered two sons, herself because she controls the fortune which she intends to pass on to the boys when they marry and produce sons of their own. Meanwhile she pays the bills and bullies Leander as her whims dictate. He has never been provident and now he is old. Because a man should be useful for something, however, Cousin Honora has bought the *Topaze*, a battered old launch that Leander ferries daily between Traverterine and the amusement park at Nangasakit across the bay. In Honora's opinion the *Topaze* keeps Leander out of other mischief and satisfies his taste for romance and nonsense. Leander's wife is Sarah, a brisk, practical woman who indulges her husband, looks after her sons, and as president of the Woman's Club works energetically for the civic improvement of St. Botolphs.

In spite of his failings, old Leander, with his regard for the ceremoniousness of things, the idea of life as a process of excellence and continuity, dominates the book; in his zest for life he is the guardian of tribal rituals and masculine skills which he hopes to pass on to his sons. What Moses and Coverly absorb from his examples of parental love and wisdom shows them to be true Wapshots in kind if not in degree. Although the family fortunes depend on proof of their virility, they cannot take to wife an ordinary mortal after they have heard in dreams the pagan sirens singing on distant beaches—certainly not Rosalie, the waif catapulted into the Wapshot household from a blazing car in which her lover died. Rosalie is lost between the power of loneliness and the power of love, and her giving herself to Moses is merely a gesture of her inner despair. Her brief passage through Leander's world serves chiefly as an excuse for Cousin Honora's decision that the time

has come for Moses to go out into the world to seek his fortune in the approved Wapshot manner.

When Moses leaves home, Coverly runs away also. First a government employee in Washington, Moses later finds his place in a New York fiduciary house. Coverly's adventures are more varied and include failure to get a job in a carpet factory because the company psychiatrists finds him psychologically unstable, work as a department store clerk, night school, civilian status in a secret government project in the South Pacific, a position on a rocket-launching project in the West. Each in the end finds the object of his seeking. Moses' choice is Melissa, the penniless ward of another Wapshot cousin, the parsimonious widow of a five-and-dime store tycoon, who lives in ugly baroque discomfort on the Hudson. For Melissa's sake Moses can even put up with Cousin Justina's penny-pinching and nagging. Coverly's fate comes to him in a sandwich shop in the Forties, in the person of Betsey, a lonely Southern girl as unpretentious as corn pone and as nourishing. So the Wapshot fortunes are made secure, for with the birth of sons to Melissa and Betsey, Cousin Honora proves as good as her word and turns over her money to Moses and

Coverly.

Meanwhile Leander's world has fallen apart. He had wrecked the *Topaze* and Cousin Honora refused to pay for the repairs. When Sarah Wapshot converts the old craft into "The Only Floating Gift Shoppe in New England" and opens the establishment with a gala tea and a sale of Italian pottery, Leander is heartbroken. At first he tries to keep busy writing his memoirs, but remembrance proves too painful for him to continue. At last, disgusted with the ugliness of life, he drowns himself. Moses and Coverly, returning to St. Botolphs to buy their father a new boat, hear instead the burial service for those who have perished at sea.

Yet the final work is Leander's. On a later visit home Coverly finds in a copy of Shakespeare a note of advice bequeathed by Leander to his sons, a litany of idiosyncratic personal belief and homely folk wisdom. Like his protagonist, John Cheever does not blink at the chaos of human existence. He accepts it and in the process makes of its truths and joys and terrors a gift of the imagination, leavening his picture of human folly and failure with a comic vision capable of seeing as well those consoling virtues that make life bearable.

THE WAPSHOT SCANDAL

Type of work: Novel

Author: John Cheever (1912-)

Time: The present

Locale: St. Botolphs, in Massachusetts; Proxmire Manor, a Westchester suburb; and Talifer, a missile research base

First published: 1963

Principal characters:

HONORA WAPSHOT, matriarch of the Wapshot clan, a Yankee individualist and an anachronism in the modern world

COVERLY WAPSHOT, her good-hearted, well-meaning nephew, a public relations worker at the Talifer Missile Site

BETSEY WAPSHOT, his wife, a woman of whims

MOSES WAPSHOT, another nephew, a stockholder and an alcoholic

MELISSA WAPSHOT, his wife, a modern Circe disguised as a suburban matron

EMILE CRANMER, the grocery boy who becomes Melissa's lover

DR. LEMUEL CAMERON, the atomic scientist in charge of the Talifer Missile Site

MR. APPLGATE, the rector of Christ Church in St. Botolphs, also an alcoholic

GERTRUDE LOCKHART, a Proxmire Manor matron driven to drunkenness, promiscuity, and suicide by the failure of her household appliances

NORMAN JOHNSON, an agent of the Internal Revenue Service

The Wapshot Scandal chronicles the decline and collapse of an ostensibly staid, prestigious, wealthy, and morally irreproachable New England family. It is first of all the story of Honora Wapshot, eccentric spinster and septuagenarian guardian of the Wapshot treasure trove, oldest living descendant of a family which settled in the fictional town of St. Botolphs, Massachusetts, in the seventeenth century. From her vantage point in this ancestral hamlet, Honora supervises—but mainly underwrites with quarterly checks from a trust fund—the lives of her two young cousins, Moses and Coverly Wapshot. At the beginning of the period traced by the novel, the two brothers have lost both their mother, Sarah, and their father, Leander, who drowned while swimming (the oft-facetious mythic allusion is a Cheever trademark), but who left behind him two sons of whom he was proud and a world which appeared to be orderly and sane. What happens to that world is revealed in the separate but intersecting lines of three stories—each in its own way crystallizing the grotesque dissolution of the Wapshot probity.

The novel begins and ends on Christmas Eve in the town of St. Botolphs, but the piety suggested by such a parenthesis is undercut by the fact that on both occasions, the minister who conducts the Episcopal service is an alcoholic. The corruption of these ancient, holy rites is the first of many indications that the stability of St. Botolphs, and particularly the stability of one of its oldest families, is gravely threatened. The first we see of St. Botolphs is its railway station, and the town itself is the alpha and omega of the novel; but between these terminal points

the Wapshots travel far, gradually losing all that is sacred and valuable in their birthright and returning to the town like wasted prodigals, impoverished, exhausted, and desolate, in a kind of parody of the traditional Christmas homecoming. The ordered world has been destroyed.

We begin with the story of Coverly Wapshot. After a Christmas visit to Honora, where he is haunted by the ghost of his high-minded father, Coverly travels west. He returns to a world that would have baffled his father, the Talifer Missile Site. At this top-secret complex of experimental laboratories and space equipment, some irrevocable error by a personnel-selecting machine has recently placed Coverly in the department of public relations, even though he is trained for computer programming. He lives in Talifer with his wife Betsey and their son Binxey, but their social life in the community is a little bleak. One day Betsey, after watching with bland indifference as a neighbor falls to his death on a cement terrace, neglects to notify anyone because of her vague fear that she might violate security regulations. Coming home one day, Coverly learns that their garbage pail has been taken by the wife of another neighbor, and the two men come to blows and bites over the incident. Shortly afterward, Betsey and Coverly attempt to meet their neighbors (who have never called on them since their arrival) by inviting twenty-five people to a cocktail party; but the plan is aborted when no one appears. Betsey is shattered, and her reaction takes the form of a lasting resentment of Coverly, whom she blames for making her live in Talifer.

Through a strange accident in circum-

stance, Coverly is offered a position on the personal staff of Dr. Lemuel Cameron, the egomaniacal titan of the missile complex. But Coverly is entirely at the mercy of Cameron's caprice, and soon discovers that he is nothing more than a chauffeur for the great man, a glorified attendant. Also, beneath the surface of Cameron's brilliance and cultural pretensions (he is capable of quoting a little poetry) Cheever exposes the viciousness of a man who professes a belief in the blessedness of the universe, but who talks with perfect equanimity of the destruction of the world, who suffers agonies of lust which can be satisfied only by a mistress in Rome, who beats his subordinates in ferocious outbursts of temper, and who has driven his son to insanity by practicing hideous extremes of cruelty under the name of "discipline." In a short time, therefore, Coverly finds that he has hitched his wagon to a rather sinister star. When his security clearance at the missile site is withdrawn because of Honora's delinquency on her federal income tax, Coverly expects that Cameron will get him reinstated. But when he goes for that purpose to Washington, where Cameron is being questioned by a Congressional Committee, he is witness to a rather startling phenomenon: as a result of his savage temperament, Cameron's own security clearance is withdrawn.

Moses Wapshot has trouble with his work but far more with his wife Melissa. He works at a brokerage house (in, presumably, New York), and the couple live with their son in an affluent little suburban cocoon called Proxmire Manor, where the only thing that occupies the police is the memory that once, several years prior to the time of the novel, a woman was arrested for tearing up a parking ticket. The community makes a pretense at maintaining rigid moral standards; on the afternoon when we see her first, Melissa is learning that a certain couple is being expelled from Proxmire Manor because the wife had been fla-

grantly promiscuous, notably with grocery boys and delivery men. But Melissa is bored with such standards, and she becomes a little unhinged when she stumbles across evidence of lesbianism at a local dance that very evening. Shortly thereafter, she herself develops a fondness and then a passion for Emile Cranmer, the boy who delivers her groceries. She seduces him without much difficulty. They begin with a weekend at her house in Nantucket, followed by rendezvous in Boston, in New York, and eventually, in a little shack outside the town of Proxmire Manor. Emile engages in the affair with little compunction; Melissa's money buys him food to satisfy an insatiable appetite and supplies him with expensive baubles, such as an eight-hundred-dollar sapphire ring. But Melissa pays much more than money to maintain the affair. After meeting Emile for the third time, she is tortured with remorse and seeks release in drunkenness. When she goes to a doctor for a physical examination, she becomes so aroused that she ends up by fornicating with him. As a last resort, she seeks the counsel of the minister, who can do nothing but refer her to the town psychiatrist. But Melissa will not settle for the explanation that she is simply sick (and therefore irresponsible); so she has only one place left to go, back to Emile.

Moses learns of his wife's infidelity from Emile's mother. The impact of the news is explosive. He nearly strangles his wife, then leaves his home and turns to drink and dissipation. By a series of bizarre and elaborate maneuvers, Melissa manages to meet Emile in Italy, where she goes with her son; she buys him at an auction in Ladros for a hundred thousand lire, they retire to her luxurious villa, and we last see them together in Rome. For his part Moses abandons himself completely to sex and alcohol. On Christmas Eve, at the end of the novel, Coverly finds him in the upstairs room of the St. Botolph's hotel drunkenly wallowing in the embrace of an equally inebriated and li-

centious widow. Moses comes home with Coverly to Honora's house, but the next morning he shuts himself in a closet full of bourbon. That is the last we see of him.

During all of this action, Honora has been steadily losing her grip. She seems at first incapable of any serious wrong, but early in the novel the old woman learns that because she has never paid any federal income tax, she faces a criminal indictment. Her friend, Judge Beasley, recommends that she take her money out of the bank and leave the country. She follows his advice and decides on a ship to Europe, but this move is scarcely the end of her troubles. On the ship she is flattered by the attentions of a nice-mannered young man who helps her to get around the decks; when he tells her that he is a stowaway, she arranges for him to be fed regularly in her cabin, and she develops enough interest in him to be capable of jealousy when she sees him in the company of another woman. But one morning, in the early hours, he attempts to steal her money belt, and she strikes him over the head with a brass lamp. Though she thinks he is dead, he survives the blow and pursues his calling elsewhere; just before the ship docks at Naples, he strolls by Honora with another aging victim on his arm. Her only way of releasing her fury is by striking out at the entire ship; she does so by the simple expedient of plugging her curling iron into an outlet in the bathroom of her cabin. This, as she has already discovered, has the effect of blowing out the ship's generators.

Honora enters the bay of Naples, therefore, on a ship in darkness. In Italy she finds little to brighten her world. She

visits the Pope in the Vatican, but his rather precarious command of the English language frustrates communication between them and only sharpens her nostalgic yearning for the familiar territory of St. Botolphs. A short time later her wish to return is satisfied, but in a cruelly unexpected way. Norman Johnson, an agent of the Internal Revenue Service who had visited her first in St. Botolphs, now comes to her calmly and politely (a fine ironic touch) with extradition papers, a criminal indictment, and an order for the confiscation of all her property. She returns to St. Botolphs immediately and spends the last of her days immured in her old house, consuming nothing but bourbon. Shortly before Christmas she is pronounced dead of starvation; but there is a final, posthumous twist. She has left Coverly with a command to hold a Christmas dinner in her house for the inmates of the local institute for the blind. Coverly executes her wishes.

The stories of Honora, Moses, and Coverly Wapshot are separately developed in the unfolding of the novel. Each character sinks and collapses in a different way. But the power of the novel derives from the skill with which Cheever has joined these stories. Thematically he forges links between Honora's impending bankruptcy, the erosion of Moses' marriage, and the reverses in Coverly's career, so that all three stories reveal the undoing of the sane, orderly world that Leander Wapshot left behind him. For generations the family had stood together; now it falls together, and Cheever traces the decline with a striking, often chilling mixture of derision and compassion. This is a novel so intensely comic that it hovers on the edge of tragedy.

THE WATERS OF KRONOS

Type of work: Novel

Author: Conrad Richter (1890-)

Time: The present and the past

Locale: Unionville, a town lost beneath the waters of time

First published: 1960

Principal characters:

JOHN DONNER, an old man

HARRY DONNER, his father

GREAT-AUNT TERESA

AUNT JESS

RICHARD RYON, Aunt Jess's husband

MRS. BONAWITZ, a neighbor of the Donners

Conrad Richter is a writer apparently haunted by a sense of the past. In his earlier novels he has re-created with quiet and assured art some spacious landscapes of an older America, regions widely separated in geography and time: the American Southwest in *The Sea of Grass*, *Tacey Cromwell*, and *The Lady*; the growth of a settlement on the Ohio-Pennsylvania frontier in the trilogy of *The Trees*, *The Fields*, and *The Town*; the period of the American Revolution in *The Free Man*; bucolic comedy in *The Grandfathers*; life in a small Pennsylvania city in the years following the Spanish-American War in *Always Young and Fair*; and the romance of the pioneer wilderness in *The Light in the Forest* and *A Country of Strangers*. These books are fresh and authentic in their presentation of regional and historical themes. In *The Waters of Kronos*, he has given us a picture of a different kind of past, the story of one man's pilgrimage back to the lost times and landmarks of his youth. In the process Mr. Richter deals expertly with two matters of great concern in modern fiction, the problem of time and the enigma of man's identity.

These, after all, make up the modern subject: the search for self and the exploration of consciousness, which is man's measurement of the nature and duration of time, as memory and history are its deposit. The crisis for personality is the challenge of the age, for in a world as fragmented and confused as our own the private sensibility is no longer self-contained, and man's search for identity and wholeness takes on the form of a despairing quest. Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus wandering the streets of Dublin, Proust's narrator confronting his

unrecognized figure in the mirror, Eugene Gant's search for the father, Camus' Jean-Baptiste Clemence in the Amsterdam bar, Saul Bellows' Henderson shouting his "I want, I want" toward the African sky—these are the images of alienated, divided man trying to define himself in space and time. In a special way, Conrad Richter presents a variation on this universal quest, which in *The Waters of Kronos* is a return to a lost and buried past.

The fantasy of time travel is not new, of course; it was as useful to Mark Twain as it was to H. G. Wells. The works of these writers, however, were based on what we would now call the mathematics of a space-time continuum; Mr. Richter's novel, on its metaphysics. There is no book quite like this anywhere in American literature. In fact, the only two works which suggest any comparison in either quality or kind are Thornton Wilder's play, *Our Town*, and Robert Frost's poem, "Directive." As in Mr. Wilder's play, we watch events unfolding with a knowledge of how much of the life presented will be wasted and sad, how much of the beautiful and good will go unrecognized until it is past all recall; and we look on helplessly, not with anticipation, but with foreknowledge of what the future holds for the people involved. *The Waters of Kronos* suggests "Directive" also in that it conveys with quiet tenderness and sad wisdom a sense of the inevitableness of things: the loneliness of being, the awkwardness of communication, the fact that life wears away to a death that is half-welcomed and half-feared, the knowledge that the waters of time wash over the years of childhood and in the end man goes back to the depths

where he began. These matters are the substance of old myths that express the fundamental common experience of the race. They shaped the strange adventure of John Donner when he went back to the place of his origins.

To begin with, it was a useless pilgrimage, as he knew, for Unionville, the town where he was born, is now buried under the waters of a huge hydroelectric dam. Donner is an old man who has lived in the West for many years. He has been ill also, and during his sickness his desire for many things now vanished from his life prompted him to make the long trip back to the Pennsylvania countryside of his ancestors. On his arrival he finds everything as he knew it would be. The town is gone, deep under the dark waters. Only the bodies of the dead have been saved from the flooding. In the new cemetery to which they have been removed they are all that remains of the past. Donner is deeply affected. Then as memories of the lost town close in about him, a miracle occurs. A man driving a miner's wagon comes down the remains of an old road and gives him a lift. Donner finds himself back in Unionville as he had known it when he was a boy.

Now, however, the situation is reversed. He is an old man walking the familiar streets, peering into the houses, meeting old friends and relatives all younger than he. The time is 1899, the day before his grandfather's funeral. He talks to his father but cannot reveal himself. He goes to the home of Great-Aunt Teresa and Aunt Jess, his childhood favorites, but all his relatives are busy with preparations for the funeral and he is turned away. Wandering through the town, he sees people whose future he already knows. When he comes to the Flail house, he remembers that the father, a butcher, would kill his wife, their four children, and himself a short time later; he frightens Mrs. Flail when he calls out to her to leave her husband. That night he sleeps in a covered bridge. The next

day he attends his grandfather's funeral. Unrecognized, he sees himself as a boy. He sees his mother, but she is surrounded by relatives. When he goes to his father's house later on and asks to see her, he is again turned away. Only Great-Aunt Teresa notes a family resemblance; she thinks he is the dead grandfather buried that day.

That night he is taken in by Mrs. Bonawitz, a neighbor of the Donners, after he has lost consciousness and fallen. During the night he meets his own boyhood again when young John Donner comes bringing word that the mother for whom old John Donner has asked will come to see the stranger the next day. Later, awake, he finds the answers to the two questions that have haunted his life. He is his father's true son, he realizes, and the face of the great frightener who had disturbed the dreams of his childhood was really himself, as old as he is now, the specter shape of man's mortality in the moment of death.

This realization joins reality and dream, part of the scheme of things that gives man his deepest knowledge, but too late. For John Donner, at the end, is dying. Reconciled with his father, he looks forward to reunion with his mother. "He could scarcely wait. She had promised yesterday that he would see her 'tomorrow' and she had had never told him a falsehood yet." This conclusion suggests that Mr. Richter has further disclosures to make from the deep wash of time's waters, the fulfillment of continued life suggested by the promise of the mother.

Part of the effectiveness of *The Waters of Kronos* comes from the device of superimposing one image upon another, past and present, youth and age, life and death. This dualism extends even into the dialogue, in which Mr. Richter's people say one thing but seem to suggest other meanings, thus setting up a resonance which we are more likely to find in poetry than in fiction. The novel, imaginatively conceived and beau-

tifully styled, is a work of quiet hints and gentle persuasions. Conrad Richter is a writer who knows his own powers and

thus is able to suit them admirably to the uses which the moral occasion demands.

A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS

Type of work: Spiritual autobiography
Author: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)
First published: 1849

In 1839, two years after his graduation from Harvard College, Henry David Thoreau and his brother John built a riverboat with their own hands and took the leisurely trip that provides the framework for Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Although the work is based on a real experience, Thoreau molded his material to fit his artistic requirements. Thus the actual time of the trip is reduced to seven days, each represented by a chapter in the work. The author does not hesitate to introduce observations and references to literary works which occur in his journals years after the actual journey. It is a mistake, then, to consider this work as a travel journal, just as it is a mistake to consider his *Walden* merely a treatise on domestic economy.

The work includes both prose and poetry and often provides meticulous observations about the flora, fauna, or geography of the area the boat passes through. So the sight of a brown-coated fisherman leads the author early in his work to discuss at length the fish in shoals in the stream and the "fish principle in nature" which disseminates the seeds of life everywhere so that wherever there is a fluid medium there are fish. In this respect, the work is somewhat like the scientific data gathering in nineteenth century works such as Darwin's *Diary of the Voyage of the H.M.S. "Beagle."* But the work is neither a naturalist's handbook nor a traveler's guide.

Actually, the geographical journey down the rivers is a metaphor for our journey into the mind of the author. As

Thoreau tells us about what he saw and thought as he drifted down the river, the reader enters the flow of ideas in the writer's mind. Just as the current of the stream bears along the boat with Thoreau and his brother, so the current of ideas in his mind bears along the reader by evoking the joy and nostalgia that Thoreau feels for those lost, golden days. As Thoreau says, human life is very much like a river running always downward to the sea, and in this book we enter for a moment the flow of Thoreau's unique existence.

We must remember that the circumstances of Thoreau's life provide an undercurrent of emotion in this apparently tranquil holiday as he recalled it in the solitude of Walden Pond. Both Henry and his brother John had been deeply in love with the same girl, Ellen Sewall, the daughter of a prominent New England family. John had first proposed marriage to her and been turned down; Henry fared no better. Perhaps their relative poverty was a contributing factor in their rejection. The two brothers are therefore friendly rivals and their relationship occasions a long discussion of the nature of friendship. When we say that a man is our friend, we commonly mean only that he is not our enemy. But the true friend will say, "Consent only to be what you are. I alone will never stand in your way." The violence of love is dangerous; durable friendship is serene and equitable. The only danger of friendship is that it will end. Such was the emotional relationship of the two brothers.

Yet their friendship was to end.

Within a year John died suddenly and horribly. Thoreau could not look back to their vacation on the rivers without realizing that the happiness of those times could never be repeated. In a very real sense, the work is a prose elegy for his dead brother, the true friend, the rival in love. As in all elegies, the reader follows the progress of the mourner's soul as it seeks consolation for the loss, and the consolation comes from the passage of the seasons and the observation of the natural processes of death and regeneration. This unstated elegiac element is the main motive for the composition. Why grieve for a particular lost friend when all the world is subject to decay and change? Every natural object when carefully observed shows the natural process of death and rebirth. If one must grieve, he should therefore grieve for the sadness of all things and the transitory nature of all beauty found in the material world. So if we go to a New England village such as Sudbury we see in great detail the teeming animal and human business here, but we must not forget that it was settled by men quite as lively as these, all gone now and their places taken by new men. The Indians are replaced by the white settlers and the settlers in turn by their children. The Concord and Merrimack rivers flow timelessly into the sea; every individual life flows to its conclusion. The passage of the seasons is cyclical in that every autumn implies a future springtime; the voyage on the rivers is circular, and the two brothers return to their point of departure; thus life must pass back into the great body from which it was first drawn.

Thoreau's thinking is strongly conditioned by romantic ideas. The whole book represents a return to nature. The author sees an accord between nature and the human spirit. He observes that he has a singular yearning for all wildness. He values cultural primitivism. He tells us that gardening is civil and social, but it wants the vigor and freedom of the forest and the outlaw. In fact, there may be an excess of cultivation that makes civiliza-

tion pathetic. His poetry is plainly in the style of the English Romantics, written in ballad measure and celebrating nature and primitive heroes:

Some hero of the ancient mold,
Some arm of knightly worth,
Of strength unbought, and faith un-
sold,
Honored this spot of earth. . . .

Among poets Thoreau praises Homer because he lived in an age when emotions flowed uncorrupted by excessive cultivation. Like Wordsworth, he has a theory that the world is but a canvas to our imaginations. He says that surely there is a life of the mind above the wants of the body and independent of it and that this life is expressed through cultivation of the capacity of the imagination. Like many romantic writers, Thoreau seems to exalt the emotions at the expense of the rational faculty. He says that men have a respect for scholarship and learning out of all proportion to the use they commonly serve and that the scholar has not the skill to emulate the propriety and emphasis of the farmer's call to his team. Act and feeling are to be valued above abstract thought.

Thoreau's work constitutes a major document in Transcendental thought. His observation that a farmer directing his team of horses is as important as a scholar's thought is connected to the theological notion that every man is called to perform his peculiar activity, to fill his particular place, in life. This view that life presents a duty for everyone, as Thoreau says, that music is the sound of universal laws promulgated, and that marching is set to the pulse of the hero beating in unison with the pulse of Nature and he steps to the measure of the universe, is characteristic of the pervasive moralism in Transcendental thought. When Thoreau looks at a sunset, he records that we are grateful to be reminded by interior evidence of the permanence of universal laws. In other words, by personal intuition a man watching a sunset

is aware of an immanent deity presiding over the universe and providing men with an ethical imperative, a duty to do.

At the end of the week Thoreau's boat grates once more on the bulrushes of its native port. The trip provides a framework to support a vast weight of Tho-

reau's thought—direct observation of nature, elegiac sentiment, romantic and transcendental notions—all flowing naturally across the mind of the young man as he drifts through the pastoral countryside of nineteenth century New England.

WHERE THE AIR IS CLEAR

Type of work: Novel

Author: Carlos Fuentes (1928-)

Time: 1910-1954

Locale: Mexico City

First published: 1958

Principal characters:

IXCA CIENFUEGOS, a curious, visionary spectator of life
FEDERICO ROBLES, a wealthy industrialist and former revolutionary
NORMA LARRAGOITI DE ROBLES, his wife
HORTENSIA CHACÓN, his blind mistress
MANUEL ZAMACONA, a poet
MERCEDES ZAMACONA, his mother
RODRIGO POLA, a literary dabbler
ROSENDA ZUBARÁN DE POLA, his mother
GERVASIO POLA, his father, executed during the Revolution
PIMPINELA DE OVANDO, an impoverished aristocrat
TEÓDULA MOCTEZUMA, an aged widow
ROBERTO RÉGULES, a business opportunist
SILVIA RÉGULES, his wife
BETINA, their daughter
BOBÓ GUTIÉRREZ,
PEDRO CASEAUX,
CHARLOTTE GARCÍA,
NATASHA, and
CUQUIS, members of the fashionable set
GABRIEL, a young wetback
BETO, a young tough
FELICIANO SÁNCHEZ, a labor leader
JUAN MORALES, a taxi driver
JAIME CEBALLOS, an ambitious law student

Nature—forests, mountains, rivers, plains—seemed to have, among Spanish-American novelists of our century, thematic preference. The great masters of fiction, such as Azuela, Rivera, Gallegos, Güiraldes, and some of his followers, such as the Peruvian novelist, Ciro Alegría, undertook to depict more the landscape than the men, or better written, to crush the human being under the burden of telluric forces. As one of Ciro's titles suggests, the world is too wide and alien

for man; he has no room in this planet in spite of its magnitude.

A new trend, however, has started to emerge in the fictional field of the Spanish-American republics. Nature and its inhabitants have now become a secondary subject, their places in fiction replaced by the city and its dwellers. The work of God has now given way to the works of men; the rural setting has been forgotten and the urban environment grasps today the preoccupations of the

writers of fiction. Instead of the objective presentation of farmers, settlers, and Indians, who struggle in vain against a jungle of greenness and obstreperous rivers, the narrator of today inserts his characters amidst a jungle of iron, cement, and rivers of light. Juan Carlos Onetti, Eduardo Mallea, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, among others, exemplify the new trend through dynamic, complex, bitter novels.

In Mexico, Carlos Fuentes inaugurated the new urban novel. Born in Mexico City, resident in many major cities of the American continents—Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Washington, Santiago, Lima, Buenos Aires—he chose the city as his main concern in his writings. This city is his city: Mexico, an urban conglomerate often visited and departed from, tasted and remembered, lived in and yearned for because of his frequent trips abroad accompanying his father, a Mexican diplomat. Very often, after beginning his literary career, he wanted to concretize and condense the multiform, variegated, tumultuous, vital stream of Mexico, a city basically disorderly, but he could not organize a fit scheme. Finally, through *La región más transparente* (*Where the Air Is Clear*), his first novel, Fuentes was able to seize upon and bring into being his desire.

The title of the novel corresponds to a phrase taken from *Visión de Anáhuac*, a study written by the Mexican essayist Alfonso Reyes, who described the high Mexican plateau as the clearest region of the air. But Fuentes gives a different, almost sarcastic interpretation to the phrase. The moral and physical atmosphere of Mexico, as seen by Fuentes, is quite contrary to that contemplated by Alfonso Reyes. It is hard to think of a darker environment than this one, involving all the characters in a cloud of fumes, rain, dust, corruption, and frustration.

This novel constitutes a vast, chaotic synthesis of the society of the Mexican capital. It is written with demolishing impetus, dialectic assumptions and mod-

ern formal techniques; through its pages the reader attends, in a criss-cross itinerary and with accelerated movement, to the drama of the urban inhabitants. All of them are marked with a deterministic sign—they cannot act in a different way or escape their environment and past. They were born in Mexico City, in a given spot, and have to be submissive to their destiny. Immersed in this geographic fatalism, Fuentes creates a great fresco depicting men and women, real or semi-fantastic, belonging to different ethnic characteristics, social and economic strata, attitudes, professions, environments. About them and at the same time partially constituted by them, solemnly and cruelly stands the city, with its "three navels"—Indian, Spanish, and cosmopolitan—its antiquity, its height, its "mineral" rain, its unquenchable thirst for human lives, its old mythology, its irrationality.

The characters of the novel are prostitutes, snobs, pseudo-intellectuals, aristocrats, international opportunists, cab drivers, *braceros*, underdogs, *nouveau riche*, politicians, social climbers, and in one way or another their lives are linked together by a character of penumbral profile, Ixca Cienfuegos. This is the only figure who escapes undamaged from the physical or moral disaster, and he does so because he is more a symbol than a real entity. He ubiquitously appears everywhere, is known by most of the characters, talks with them, listens to their autobiographical confessions, and expresses the voice of the old, instinctive Indian ancestry. He, perhaps, represents the anonymous, the people, the Mexican.

In spite of the concreteness and turpitude of many pages, the novel cannot be classified as belonging to the realistic tradition, taking this term in its traditional connotation. Fuentes belongs, as do other Mexican writers of his generation, to the so-called "symbolic realism." He tries to perceive, behind the feel of things and situations, a reality closer to truth than the evident daily reality, as he states. This view makes his novel a surrealist and

naturalistic story, with characters close to fantasy as well as life, well-known places and others without local fixation, dialogues made of uncommon words and others built up with platitudinous and cheap sentences, temporal situations of today and of the time past. The reader feels that he is amidst a sad, rotten, turbulent, intemporal carnival, in which every character is merely a player acting a prefixed role.

The technical aspect of the novel is basically that of the masters of our century: Faulkner, Dos Passos, Lawrence, and Huxley. This means that the stream of consciousness, dislocation of time, social protest, interference of characters, and crudity of expressions are omnipresent. Moreover, there is not a plot, a development, a climax. It could be said that Fuentes wrote a novel of fragments, linked together with very circumstantial vinculations, with the intention of creating a kaleidoscopic panorama of men, environments, and situations.

The book is divided into three parts of different lengths. The first presents the most important characters, Ixca Cienfuegos, Manuel Zamacona, Federico Robles, his wife Norma Larragoiti de Robles, Rodrigo Pola, Hortensia Chacón, the Ovando family. In the second, the largest section of the book, the lives of these men and women meet, intermingle, interfere, collide. In the third, the shortest section, new though secondary characters appear. The book closes with an intent to synthesize Mexican history.

Ixca Cienfuegos opens the book. He is the spokesman of the city or perhaps the city itself, as is suggested almost at the end of the book. From his words we know that the ancient Indian spirit remains always and everywhere present in all phases of Mexican life. The ancestral forces operate mainly in the city of Mexico, cradle of the strongest old Indian culture. The old gods have not died; they look upon the people of every condition and sooner or later devour them all. From this initial monologue of Ixca, the parade

of characters begins to defile in a tumultuous, contrapuntal way, sometimes in a consecutive linkage, sometimes with abrupt jumps. Beginning with the first matutinal hours of the day, Gladys García, a poor but not depraved prostitute, seeks for food and while roaming downtown starts to remember her life, her parents, her lovers. On the night of the same day, she sees a group of fashionable, snobbish people—corrupted, pseudo-intellectual—who engage in a wild party. Federico Robles, lawyer and banker, then appears in the book. He is a *nouveau riche*, despotic man, with no social concerns, who has climbed to high social esteem by cunning and wealth obtained through dishonest means during the days of the Mexican Revolution. He was pushed to enter this movement without consciousness of what it was for, but at the end of it he found himself with money, prestige, pride, and reasons to justify his holdings. Later he marries Norma Larragoitia, an unscrupulous, status-seeking woman who thinks she is doing a permanent favor to her husband because of her marriage to him. Robles has a lover, Hortensia Chacón, a long-suffering woman, blinded by her first husband, who loves Robles without self-interest and with compassion. Another jump in the plot sends the reader to meet Rodrigo Pola, son of a revolutionist shot to death without knowing his child. Just as abruptly other characters are introduced: the Ovandos, an aristocratic family of the past days of Díaz, who struggle to no avail to keep their haughtiness and money; Manuel Zamacona, an idealist, original thinker, and poet, and many other people of lesser importance. All of them are met by the omnipresent Ixca Cienfuegos, who appears in the crucial moment of frustration or confession of the characters.

The second part of the book constitutes the section of the frustration. All the main people of the novel, Ixca excepted, fall into disaster. Robles becomes bankrupt and is repudiated by his wife;

Norma perishes in a blaze in her home; Pola climbs the social staircase but is unhappy; the Ovandos are forced to work in the humblest jobs and live in secluded and poor rooms; Manuel Zamacona is killed in a bar. In this way, Fuentes proves that the ancient Mexican deities, always in control, and hatred of human lives have taken their revenge. Every life has been little more than a hideous play, as in the past days of human sacrifices.

The last pages of the book are perhaps the most successful. They are a tight, energetic synthesis of the tragic, painful history of the Mexican people. There appear many people of decisive importance upon the Mexican country and its society, the conquerors of wealth, the elected, those who have a name, and finally the common people, the anonymous names, the "you," the poor, the

ever-suffering. And there stands also Gladys García, the first-appearing character, and Ixca Cienfuegos, symbol of the city and of Mexican history who would like to say fatalistically that these things have happened, that they could not be avoided or halted, in the most transparent region of the air.

Without doubt Fuentes has written a singular novel, a story, or collection of interlinking stories, told in an overflowing, contrasted, negative, black protesting tone. But it cannot be denied that *Where the Air Is Clear* is also a book born out of compulsory passion and love for his city and country. To echo the words of one of his characters, when a person writes about Mexico, the work must be done with joy, anger, compassion, hatred, and the fire of passion. The novel is a work of genuine, if undisciplined, achievement.

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

Type of work: Drama

Author: Edward Albee (1928-)

Time: Sunday morning, the present

Locale: The living room of a house on the campus of a small New England college

First presented: 1963

Principal characters:

MARTHA, large, boisterous, youthful-looking

GEORGE, her husband, thin, greying

HONEY, a young blonde woman, rather plain

NICK, her husband, blond, good-looking

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf? Edward Albee and his characters ask several times in the play. After witnessing a marathon verbal and psychological massacre, the reader may answer, along with Martha, the casualty most maimed, "I am."

George, a history professor, and Martha arrive home at two A.M., after a cocktail party given by Martha's father, president of the college, to enable old and new teachers to get to know one another, an innocuous phrase that soon takes on lethal significance. Martha informs her weary husband that she has asked Nick, a handsome new teacher, and his wife,

Honey, to an after-party party, because her father has asked her and George to be nice to them.

Six years older than George, Martha was once married to a beautiful boy who ran a power mower. Although her father annulled the marriage, Martha still loves and admires him, as she clearly reveals in a maudlin monologue at the beginning of Act III. George loathes him. Early in the play, George charges Martha with a "braying" sociability and excessive drinking. Martha lashes back, calling him a blank nonentity and saying that if he really existed as a person she would divorce him. Later George tells Nick that

he and Martha have nothing in common, that they are merely perambulating the remnants of their wits.

For these frequent insults, they take revenge on each other in the form of "Fun and Games," the title of Act I. They have created quite naturally a somewhat socially acceptable ritual for the release of their bitterness, perversities, self-loathing, sexual frustrations, hate, as well as grudging love and affection; "fun and games," characteristic of clever, educated, supposedly uninhibited moderns who seldom communicate in anything but "in"-sounding jokes, witticisms, and puns, enable George and Martha to turn their insides out, to move easily at critical moments from one stance to another, all in the name of good clean fun. Birth is a joke that sets off a chain reaction, making life one monstrous gag.

These games, requiring a kind of *com-media dell' arte* pace and readiness of wit, involve a profusion of sex, drinking, and cursing. Many are spontaneously improvised upon ordinary moments: the opening of a door, going to the bathroom, the conventions of getting acquainted. Others are habitual, personal games with rigid rules. The games are both an occasion for and a relief from the spew of insults, taunts, teasings, and abusive names that George and Martha and, later, Nick indulge in. George tells Nick that he and Martha are like children viciously playing sad games. The characters slip in and out of these games so subtly that it is difficult for both reader and characters to mark the frequent shifts from mood to mood, for the blend of "fun" and seriousness is ambiguous. They charge one another with not knowing the difference between illusion and reality. When Nick says disgustedly that he cannot tell whether George and Martha are lying or not, George insists that they must behave as though they themselves knew the differences. Nevertheless, he himself has stopped caring.

Honey and Martha complement each other. Martha is vulgarly and boisterously

sexual; Honey is vividly and "maidenly" sensual. Martha is an alcoholic; Honey gets drunk on occasion. Martha desperately wants a child; Honey takes abortion pills. While Honey is friendly in her simple-minded way, Nick is grimly polite. Hard, cold, introspective private, ambitious, Nick doesn't like games. As George makes a relentless assault on his stone front, viciously mocking him, at first subtly, then openly, Nick becomes increasingly annoyed; he drops his solicitous manner with his wife and snaps at her. But eventually, he reveals himself to George. He married Honey, a childhood friend, because she was pregnant, but it proved to be a hysterical pregnancy. Honey is another factor in their marriage. While it would appear to have been money and position, passion was the real basis of George's own marriage. To George, Nick represents the younger generation. There is symbolic truth in George's joking pretense, in the final act, that Nick is his son. When Nick, going along with one of George's games, outlines his strategy for climbing up in the college by playing "musical beds" among the faculty wives, including Martha, George indicates that Nick is more serious than he himself realizes. George tries to warn and advise him, but Nick answers contemptuously. It seems to George that Nick's retort is a fitting peroration to the development of Western civilization as it enters its decline. A biochemist, Nick is engaged in research which will enable scientists to control birth and gene distribution. Such research, as George argues, will spawn a race of test-tube men who will all resemble Nick. Also, it will be necessary to cut the sperm tubes of many men. Albee suggests that emotionally this castration has already occurred: Martha unmans both George and Nick, and Honey emasculates Nick. Against scientific determinism, George opposes historical inevitability, with its acceptance of human nature, its prolonged woes and brief joys.

After an act of "Fun and Games,"

Nick probably reflects the sentiments of a large segment of readers when he tells George that he cannot see why others should be subjected to such marital violence. These people are so unlikable, so lacking in the familiar characteristics or situation tags which most playwrights use to engage an audience (even Beckett's bums are "fun," reminiscent as they are of clowns), that empathy would seem impossible. Certainly, at one time or other, most of us talk to one another in a mercilessly sadistic way, but this is ■ side we renounce, and we might sympathize with a character who shows it, if he soon reveals an admirable trait. Fascinated though he may be by the sheer ferocity of George and Martha's witty, vibrant dialogue, the besieged reader is kept at a distance by a profound conscious reluctance to identify with the characters and thus associate himself with the orgiastic flux of emotions.

Simultaneously, the way for identification is being opened by the reader's empathy with Honey and Nick, especially the latter. By the time they enter, the reader would rather, like Nick, be in bed asleep, at least having his own inescapable nightmares, not someone else's. As soon as Nick allows himself to play this quasi-real game, for the sadistic fun of it (the play appeals to the sadist in us all), he and the reader are hooked, and the game grows deadly serious. More resistant readers may identify with Honey, who does not seem to know what is going on but whose actions signify that the process of suggestion has caused a subconscious eruption; certain readers will enjoy the sadistic interplay of emotions without seeing, but certainly feeling, their significance. In his dynamic relationship to the play, a psychic tension is generated in the reader, and sustained after the book is closed. What mean these intimate horrors? The acting out of George and Martha's own nightmares becomes very suggestive to the younger couple; turned inside out by their emotional exhibitionism, they become mirrors in

whom Nick and Honey may see reflections of their own inner selves and perhaps take heed.

Three of the four major games, links in the spine of the play, are played in Act II, entitled "*Walpurgisnacht*." The first, begun in Act I, is Humiliate the Host, and George is *it*. In search of an "heir apparent" to her father's great achievement, the building of the college, Martha found George. Detailing his career, she lashes him into a crying fury. At the height of an argument about their son, she returns to the subject of George's failures and reveals that her father forced him to withdraw his novel. When Martha tells the story of the novel, which was very autobiographical, Nick recognizes it because previously George had told it to him in the guise of an anecdote about a school friend. The boy accidentally killed his mother with a shotgun; the following summer, while learning to drive with his father, he swerved to avoid a porcupine and hit a tree, and his father was killed, with the result that for the past thirty years he has not uttered a sound. In a sense, of course, George's verbal amplitude has been expended upon saying nothing. When Martha refuses to relent, George chokes her. Subdued by Nick, George suggests a game of Get the Guests.

Pretending now to tell the plot of his second novel, George relates the story of Nick and Honey as told to him by Nick when the women were out of the room. Martha and Nick protest, but Honey is at first too drunk to understand. Then she says that, knowing the people, she dislikes the story. Nick pleads with George to stop. Honey rages at Nick for telling an outsider about their marriage and runs out to be ill for the second time. Nick threatens to get even. Martha charges George with having taken advantage of "pigmies." He reminds her that she has certainly cut *him* to pieces tonight. Her reply shocks him. He claims that it is she who is sick; he has tried to go along with her all these years in her bloody games.

Concluding that tonight their whole arrangement for maintaining some kind of surface on which to stand has collapsed, they declare total war on each other.

While Honey lies on the bathroom floor sucking her thumb, and while George reads a book about the decline of the West, feigning indifference, Martha gets revenge by making love to Nick in the kitchen. While this game of Hump the Hostess is going on, Honey emerges from the bathroom, crying that she doesn't want children, and George realizes now that she has been killing her embryos with pills. As a final triumph over Martha, George decides to tell her that a messenger has come with the news that their son, expected home that day for his birthday, is dead. Later, Martha taunts Nick for his sexual failure, which he blames on alcohol, and treats him like a houseboy. She has passed her life in meaningless infidelities with men such as Nick. George, she tells him, was the only man who ever satisfied her; she is punishing him for the "sin" of loving her, and she realizes that one night she will go too far and break him. At one point, Martha and George gang up on Nick; with Honey's indirect help, they make him over into a potential George.

The last game, Bringing up Baby, is played in Act III, "The Exorcism." Apprehensive, Martha pleads that they play no more games. George assures her that it will soon be over; like a surgical operation, using the scalpel of the tongue, the layers of skin, even the bones, have been removed, and the marrow is next. At this point they have all indeed got to know one another for Honey decides that she doesn't remember anything, suggesting that she and George, also, have made love. George gives Martha her cue and prompts her in the one game they always played, until tonight, alone. Perhaps they are more public tonight because, having reached their limits, they recognize in this couple duplicates of themselves as they were in the beginning. Almost weeping, Martha goes through the ritual

by rote, according to rules evolved over the years. There are moments of weird lyricism in the recitation describing their feelings for the son. Honey screams that she wants a child. Toward the end George accompanies Martha with a litany in Latin. Sensing that he has led her to some kind of precipice, Martha stops. George declares that Martha needs her son because her father does not care whether she lives or dies; she has used their son as a club to dominate George. Martha declares that the one person she has tried to protect and redeem in this disastrous marriage is their "son." George finally announces that their son died in a car wreck, with his driver's permit on his person. Thus, the parents kill their children before they are born, George and Honey directly, motivated differently, Martha and Nick indirectly.

With rage and loss, Martha screams that George cannot decide for himself that their son is dead, since they created him together. Horrified, Nick understands now. The son is imaginary; it was not possible for them to have children, they tell him, communally. The rules were that if either told a stranger, the other, like God the Creator, could kill the son. The death of the son is the price of surrender to the need to exhibit emotional turmoil before strangers. Just as God sent Christ to comfort the suffering, they created their son.

Albee sounds the deepest level of marital discord in his depiction of this familial mayhem, in which every psychological weapon within the resources of sick, near psychotic people is used. People reach such a dismal state sometimes that the only way any contact can be made is through the grotesque exaggerations of fun and games; these finally culminate in a *Walpurgisnacht* in which illusion and reality are so dynamically fused that the charged emotions of two human beings who are in one sense dead to each other may become humanly engaged. Thus, Martha congratulates George on his performance in the game, Get the Guests.

They are hollow people, but in their clashing they utter the only human sounds such people can hope to make. Albee is probably not saying that emotional violence and moral anarchy are good. But in contrast to the bland surface of most lives, constituted of lies, illusions, subterfuge, avoidance, and pale conventions, such experiences may be the means of exorcising some of the lies we are most reluctant to relinquish.

Their son, as real, in a sense, as any "real" child, was born of a mutual, profound need. Fun and games provided a means of keeping the illusion alive, but by the nature of fun and games, this final, unendurable exposure and desecration became inevitable. While exposing every personal truth about each other, they had to nurture together this illusory parenthood; but in taking revenge upon each other, they kill the one illusion upon which their sanity of cohesiveness as man and wife has depended. Like Godot, the son is a man-made savior, and reliance on him is foredoomed.

In the last four pages, the submerged pathos the reader has almost grudgingly sensed emerges. George sends his "children" out into the world; Nick and Honey are *perhaps* beginning the cycle the older couple has just completed. Thrown back upon each other now, plunged to the bottom of despair, where Kierkegaard believed man finds either salvation or suicide, they see each other completely naked of any decent life rooted in reality, any consoling illusions. The vacuum they share seems the womb of love. The death of their imaginary son may make love possible. Not a great love, not a "healthy" love, it will be next to nothing; but it will be something. Now she is afraid of Virginia Woolf, for the "wolf" each man creates for himself has been unleashed within her.

Albee's absurd perspective on modern man's psychological predicament is expressed with meaningful exaggeration. With the mimic talent of a tape recorder, he unreels for over three hours. One may

question the naturalistic, excruciatingly meticulous conversational detail. Albee pushes naturalism just beyond its limits, achieving an expressionistic effect: the reader is overwhelmed with one lucid image of a psychological and spiritual condition. This dynamic image could be forged perhaps only within limitations of situation, set, and character. Albee is not interested in realism; he does not even describe the set. The reader is transported into a realm as unrepresentational as that in which *Waiting for Godot* is set, a realm where intuitive truths, painfully revelatory and blinding in the same instant, are perceived. Cramped in the core of nowhere, reduced to the lowest level of existence and human relationship, Beckett's bums scrape the barrel of human resources for ingenious ways to pass the time while waiting for Godot. They comprise Everyman—stripped. Here Albee places two well-to-do couples in a comfortable home and presents them in the very act of stripping themselves. His expressionistic technique was already taking shape in *The Zoo Story* and *The Death of Bessie Smith* (first performed in Berlin) and in *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream*, all quickly-written, one-act, autobiographical plays in which people talk to one another with a vicious frankness seldom sparked in life, but presented in an authentic manner. It seems absurd that emotions which appear so real and yet lack the kind of careful preparation necessary to most emotionally devastating plays could generate such heat.

In this play, although he claims to write a black brand of humor, Albee takes us to the depths of the ridiculous instead. The bond among other well-known playwrights of the American Theater of the Absurd (a useful term, to be used with discrimination) is reputed to be humor. To label Albee's special vision "humor" distracts rather than illuminates. Even as sick comedy that sees humor in hate, it is too prolonged, too vicious, too inhumane to function as humor. Almost every line has a semblance

of humor, but lines that in moderation, in appropriate contexts, would be funny or witty have, when taken together, a non-comedic effect. The exaggerated indulgence of Albee's characters in witty quarreling is the major expressionistic projection of their inner sickness. But this is humor as symptom, not as reader participation. Audience laughter at this play must be a rather frightening display of

group therapy and catharsis. The label "humor" lends a spurious respectability to sickness. As undraped sickness, on the other hand, the play provides some alarming insights. Albee is serious in a way that few writers are, for it is a serious matter when the plight of human beings can be viewed in this horribly humorous light.

THE WILD PALMS

Type of work: Novel

Author: William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Time: 1927 and 1937

Locale: The United States

First published: 1939

Principal characters:

HARRY WILBOURNE, a twenty-seven-year-old interne

CHARLOTTE RITTENMEYER, a young married woman

THE TALL CONVICT, serving a ten-year term for train robbery

THE PALE CONVICT, his work partner in the flood

THE WOMAN, pregnant and stranded in the flood

Often considered to be an inferior novel even by Faulkner's better critics, *The Wild Palms* has had a curious history, for it has most often been reprinted as two short novels (*Wild Palms* and *Old Man*), sometimes in the same volume and even more often as two separate books. That it has been so casually treated is unfortunate, for it is structurally perhaps the most subtle and demanding of Faulkner's novels, and it is also his best approach to the comically absurd world of male-female relationships.

Most of the misunderstanding of the novel grows from its unique structure. The two short novels, either of which appears to be able to stand alone, are presented in alternating chapters in the novel. Their plots never cross nor relate directly to each other; but they are so deeply involved in theme and symbolic and imagistic texture that apart each seems almost a thematic contradiction of the other. Together, however, they form an organic unit in which contrasts form parallels and contradiction becomes para-

dox. The novel demands of its readers an imaginative commitment beyond that of a more conventionally constructed novel, for its paradox, of both meaning and structure, must be solved by the reader willing to read the book with the attention to rhythm and form that he would normally give to a piece of music and the attention to images and words that he would normally give to a poem.

The pattern of events of the two parts of the novel are relatively simple. "Wild Palms" takes place in 1937, in the heart of the depression, and is the love story of Harry Wilbourne and Charlotte Rittenmeyer. Charlotte leaves her husband for Harry who, not having finished his internship, is incapable of gaining any steady work. They wander from New Orleans to Chicago to Wisconsin and even to a remote mining camp in Utah until Charlotte becomes pregnant accidentally; their journeys, too, have carried them deeper into squalor and their love from romance into the physically sordid. Urged by Charlotte, Harry performs an

unsuccessful abortion which results in her death; but in prison he refuses suicide, choosing grief to nothing.

The events in "Old Man" take place ten years earlier during the great Mississippi River flood of 1927, and they compose the chronicle of a comic hero in a physical world gone quite as mad as the social world of the depression in "Wild Palms." A young convict is sent out onto the flooded Mississippi in a skiff with another convict to rescue a woman stranded in a tree and a man on a cottonhouse. He loses the other convict, rescues the woman who proves to be very pregnant, and is carried downstream by a wild flood. Battered by gigantic waves, he is offered three temptations for escape, but after a time killing alligators with a group of Cajuns he returns the boat and the woman with her safely born child and is given an additional ten-year sentence for attempted escape.

Neither of these brief descriptions even approaches the complexities of the two stories, separately or as a unit, for theirs is an artistic value of reflection and texture in which event is but an item of form, and form a vehicle for imaginative idea. "Wild Palms" is a tragicomedy, a parody of Hemingway's romantic "anti-romantic" ideas (particularly those in *A Farewell to Arms*), a parable of a fallen world in which *agape* is lost to an *eros* made perverse by the forces of a society built on money and sexually inverted by the "freeing" of woman. "Old Man" is also a bitter comedy, but one in which the comic hero, God's fool, bears the burdens of the world and finds his victory in seeming defeat, his reward in the last ironic slap of "risible nature." "Wild Palms" resolves itself in onanistic frustration, and "Old Man" discovers the rewards of struggle in this life to be only the peace of being allowed out of life. The novel is a product, then, of the same era which produced *The Waste Land*, but its Chaucerian comic sense makes it more than an existential lament for a meaningless world, transforms its mad-

ness and ugliness into a Christian comedy of human folly which shows man at his worst, only to remind him of the necessity of striving toward his best. The novel is not a moral allegory, although "Old Man" often seems to be, but a parable of the vanity of human wishes and the follies of this earth.

The primary themes of both parts of the novel are those of human folly: the tragic consequences of romantic but earthly ideals and the failure of sex as the essential element of human fulfillment. Both Harry and the convict are victims of romantic ideals: the convict was sent to prison for an attempted train robbery inspired by reading dime novels, and intended to impress a girl; Harry was betrayed into his affair with Charlotte by his ascetic student's life and his belief (fostered by Charlotte) in physical love and the value of physical permanence in a spiritless world.

If the heroes of both stories are innocents in a confusing world, women offer them little aid or solace. The women in the novel represent the two emasculating extremes of the female character, isolated with the simplicity of parable. Charlotte is the de-feminized female artist of masculine mind and manner, the aggressor in the sexual act and in life; the woman in "Old Man" is simple nearly to mindlessness, for she is the mother, the primitive force of life to be borne by man as the weight of his duty. Charlotte is destroyed by the sex which she attempts to use as a man uses his, but cannot because she is what she wishes to deny—a woman, a vessel and bearer of man's seed and progeny. The woman in "Old Man" realizes and fulfills her proper role as mother, but in this comic world fails as a romantic sexual figure even as she succeeds; she lives on but without her man, the convict who had complained that she, of all the women in the world, is the one with whom he has been thrown by chance.

The men are innocents; the women are failures with them. "Old Man" ends with

the convict's brief, violent summation of his feelings about the world of sex and women. "Wild Palms" ends with Harry's refusal to kill himself only because in his grief he can find the onanistic solace of the memory of Charlotte's flesh. Both stories end in hollowness and ugliness. Each, taken by itself, presents a vision of frustration and despair, yet the novel itself has no such effect.

The two stories present opposing accounts of the nature of failure and comic success which, if seen in the perspective which their juxtaposition in an organic whole imposes upon the reader (a perspective similar to that formed by the shifting points of view in *As I Lay Dying*), cancel each other out. This is a vision which causes the reader to apply his own norms to the events and see the

exact nature of the folly of both extremes, of sex and sexlessness, of romantic and anti-romantic ideals shattered. The world of *The Wild Palms* is a mad world, but its madness casts bright light upon our own world, mad in its own right but alive with balances which may be found with comic and artistic perspective.

Faulker does not explicitly offer his reader the moral of his novel but it is there to be drawn. That the reader can find it by an imaginative and creative act of his own synthesis is the true power of the novel. When man can laugh for joy even as he weeps in sorrow, he can survive and prevail. Such was the intention of this novel which, for all its difficulty, is an extraordinary example of the variety of Faulkner's ability, of his artistic genius.

WILD WALES

Type of work: Travel journal

Author: George Henry Borrow (1803-1881)

First published: 1862

Principal personages:

GEORGE HENRY BORROW, the narrator

HENRIETTA BORROW, his stepdaughter

MRS. BORROW, his wife

JOHN JONES, his guide at Llangollen

If ever a book denied the dictum that travel broadens the mind it is *Wild Wales*. Borrow went to Wales in July, 1854; four months later he emerged, completely satisfied with his competence in Welsh language, literature, and history. He had seen at first hand some historical places—ruins, churches, castles, the history of which he generally knew better than the guides; he felt it his duty and pleasure to show up their ignorance and improve their knowledge of their national heritage. The book is roughly a catalogue of these visits from Wrexham Church in the north to Caerfili Castle in the south, layered with associated legends and frosted with scraps of incidental information and opinion, the whole done to a turn in Borrow's rigid but clear prose.

Included in the Welsh material are the Welsh themselves; Borrow records conversations with more than one hundred of those of all ages and kinds he met during his expeditions around Llangollen in the north from early August to late October, 1854, and on his southern walking tour which ended early in November.

At the close of the trip Borrow read an account of the Battle of Inkerman in the Crimea, which is mentioned from time to time and forms one of the several threads holding together the conglomerate of historical and personal anecdotes. Among other threads are the Irish gipsies, who have driven out the Romany, that Borrow is especially interested in, acquaintances he meets more than once, dreams which come real, Welsh antagonism to the

'Saxons," English contempt for the Welsh. The book has simply the form of his travels, falling roughly into two sections. In the first sixty-three chapters Borrow tells how he and his wife and step-daughter rented a cottage in Llangollen from the beginning of August to the end of October. From there he makes visits, sometimes alone, sometimes with his guide, John Jones, his wife or step-daughter, to Bangor, Ruthyn, Holyhead, Caernavon, Snowdon, and other places on and off the tourist track which was opening up in North Wales for the benefit of the teeming industrial populations of Yorkshire and Lancashire, whose presence Borrow loathes. The most interesting trip should have been that to Plas Newydd, the home of the recently dead but latterly famous "Ladies of Llangollen," but Borrow tells us little about them.

In the second half, chapters sixty-four through one hundred and nine, Borrow tells of his walks over one hundred and fifty miles in about three weeks through Western and Southern Wales, wilder and more Welsh than the region of his northern sojourn.

The book is much more than the record of a summer journey undertaken because he spoke Welsh and knew the history and bardic poetry of Wales. Borrow introduces the volume by giving four reasons for writing it: Wales has scenery, history, illustrious men; it also has its people with their own language, as the Scottish Highlands have not, because of conquest and emigration. But the most powerful impression is that of Borrow himself, standing in the foreground of every natural scene, recalling historical events for the benefit of the present inhabitants, and everywhere carrying his message that the Welsh must maintain their identity. Borrow thoroughly enjoys being a solitary Welsh-speaking Englishman, to the confusion of the Welsh, and takes the lead in almost every dialogue, generally reported in direct speech and sometimes in dramatic form. When he

meets man, woman, or child he first asks the name of farm or village and then explains its meaning and history to the gaping locals.

The chapters are short and many, and there seems to be no principle in their organization; generally when Borrow has recorded the day's doings or his adventures on a walk in the country he tells where he slept for the night. There are accounts of so many inns, which Borrow prefers to "railway" hotels, that the book would have served as the Baedeker of its time, especially in his fine discrimination of the brews of ale at the different inns. He has a respectful eye for the wild grandeur of the countryside but is not greatly appreciative of it nor is he much aroused against industrial plants which were beginning to alter the ways of the Welsh, making Borrow's one of the last records before nineteenth century industrial England really made its presence felt there. Most of Borrow's expeditions are purposeful and he achieves what he intends. Though Borrow generally applies the adjective to the Welsh scenery (and always to Irish people), what the Welsh thought of *Wild Wales* is difficult to ascertain but may be surmised. Like Samuel Johnson in the Highlands or Mrs. Trollope in America, he has no hesitation in condemning what does not meet the standards of a civilized Englishman.

From all this one might conclude on first or brief acquaintance that Borrow shows himself as an unpleasant and self-righteous tourist. He can be both, but the most interesting aspect of the work is his unsparing and incredible candor. When he loses an argument or comes off second best in a display of learning, he acknowledges the fact; sometimes to spare his interlocutor he conceals his knowledge, resulting on one occasion in his accepting the role of a Roman Catholic priest and blessing a party of Irish returning to Ireland. No role could have been more abhorrent to this thorough-going antipapist. Although Borrow contradicts himself on at least one occasion, the reader trusts the

author's detailed memory of every conversation, so that the record and the character of the man have the ring of truth.

Borrow displays three other characteristics: curiosity, especially about Welsh and other languages (he speculates freely about the connections between them), compassion, and rectitude. His compassion he shows towards the Irish vagrants who pursue him crying, "Give us God!" and towards what he calls "the Church of England cat." After this bedraggled creature attached itself to Borrow and his family in their lodgings at Llangollen, Borrow learned, that it had belonged to a former Anglican vicar in the town and now was persecuted for its former attachment by the "Calvinist-Methodists" whom Borrow found largely made up the population of mid-nineteenth century Wales. Borrow is a whole-hearted defender of what he calls "the poor, persecuted Church of England," the Established Church of Wales as well as of England, and he enters debates on baptism and the like with proselytizing zeal. He protects the cat, restores it to health, and provides for it when the Borrowes

leave to return to their country home in East Anglia. He makes a point of visiting churches as well as ruins, and he carries the *Book of Common Prayer* with a white shirt, a razor, a pair of stockings, and twenty sovereigns when he sets out on his walking tour south.

His rectitude is not simply that of a good Anglican but of an English gentleman. Borrow in wild Wales is an excellent example of that energetic and fearsome type, the founders of the British Empire who, finding much to displease their rigid tastes in booming nineteenth century England, left for foreign parts to explore, learn the language, and govern the natives. In spite of Borrow's admiration for the Welsh one feels a certain superiority and arrogance in his attitude and comments, perhaps revealed in the fact that he does not seem to care whether the Welsh take his exhortations to heart or not. His controlled energy sends him into and through Wales and then to the writing of a large book. If we and the Welsh did not hearken to his words, that was our and their loss. Mr. Borrow had spoken.

WIND, SAND AND STARS

Type of work: An autobiography in novel form

Author: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944)

Time: The 1920's and 1930's

Locale: Mainly North Africa, South America, and Spain

First published: 1939

Principal personages:

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

PRÉVOT, a navigator

HENRI GUILLAUMET, a friend, and

MERMOZ,

NÉRI,

DELY,

RIGUELLE, fellow pilots

EL MAMUN, a Moor at the Dakar-Juby division base

LEFEBVRE and

ABRI, mechanics

In 1926, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry embarked upon a career as an airline pilot for the aviation company which eventually became Air France. His memories of

adventurous and fulfilling years as a pilot and, to a lesser degree, his experiences as a newspaper reporter at the front during the Spanish Civil War constitute the raw

material for the varied and isolated episodes of this work. It is a book which barely qualifies as a novel since there is no continuity of action and no real attempt to disguise the autobiographical orientation of the book. However, the brilliance of the imagery, the epic proportions which the narration assumes at times, and, above all, the unity of meaning which fuses together the episodes, transfigure the work into a form beyond pure autobiography.

Despite the legendary aspect of the pilot's exploits, the tone of the novel is one of sobriety and modesty. For Saint-Exupéry, courage in its highest conception is born out of a sense of responsibility. When courage becomes temerity, tempting death for the sake of vanity and excitement, it serves nothing and should be condemned. That is why toredors do not elicit the admiration of the narrator of *Wind, Sand and Stars*. They seek primarily the glory of one Sunday afternoon, whereas the sacrifice of the pilots who carry the mail is made with a feeling of chosen and accepted duty. Thanks to this notion of a dangerous mission to be carried out conscientiously, quietly, and to its final conclusion, man engaged in such action discovers a kind of spiritual truth; he frees himself of earthly and selfish concerns and finds that what really animates him are the bonds which link him to his fellow men.

This lucid gravity in the face of imminent death and this sense of duty are vividly illustrated by the harrowing experience of Henri Guillaumet, a close friend and fellow pilot of the narrator, who crashed in the Chilean Andes in mid-winter of 1930. He took shelter from a blinding snowstorm and remained under his cockpit for two days and two nights. On the third day he set out in temperatures far below zero. He was obliged to hack out steps in steep ice-walls with his boots, and his feet soon became swollen and bleeding from frostbite. On the third day he fell from exhaustion many times and at last he no longer tried to get up.

But then he remembered that, if a man disappears without a trace, his death is not declared legal for four years and his wife cannot receive her pension. He decided to prop his body up against a rock so that it would be found when the snows melted. However, once on his feet again, he continued on—for three more days—and was eventually rescued by a peasant woman. For Saint-Exupéry the grandeur of Guillaumet resided in his refusal to discuss his act in terms of courage; his determination was engendered by the realization that he held in his hands the joy or sorrow of his wife and comrades and that he was still responsible for the mail which had gone down in the plane. The greatness of the man is to be found in his disinterested acts.

Through flying, Saint-Exupéry was able to perceive another basic verity which he illustrates concretely in his work: the obstacles which natural elements place in man's way offer him the means to discover himself. In measuring himself against the forces of nature—the mountains, the snowstorm, the cyclone, the desert—the pilot finds himself face to face with the fundamental problems of man's relationship to the earth and to death. Like the farmer who uses his plow to struggle against the soil, the aviator has a tool which places him in contact with the natural elements: his plane.

In 1936 the author's plane took him on an adventure which led to certain self-discoveries and which he recounts vividly in *Wind, Sand and Stars*. On the flight from Paris to Saigon he and his navigator crashed in the Egyptian desert. They made a march of three days in the torrid heat, covered about one hundred and twenty-five miles and had only a little more than a pint of liquid between them. The sterility of the desert and the proximity of death were, nevertheless, spiritually rewarding. The smallest signs of life—the tracks of a desert fox—prompted appreciation and gratitude for the common pleasures that existence offers. The imminence of death led not to panic but

to a detached sense of self-fulfillment in regard to enriching years spent as an aviator. Because of his tool, the plane, and his combat with nature the pilot felt himself rich with treasures that cannot be judged by material standards.

Moreover, the plane is for this "poet of the air" a way of annihilating time and space in order to link men of all nations and races. The pilot himself profits enormously from the opportunity to deepen his knowledge of man. Writing at a time when men are obsessed by the concrete performance of machines—how high and how fast can the plane fly?—Saint-Exupéry stresses above all the plane's capacity for surmounting the natural barriers which separate human beings. At the beginning of his career he spent a great deal of time among the refractory Moorish tribes in the western Sahara. In charge of a refueling station in this almost uninhabited part of the world, he succeeded in gaining the esteem of these nomads and was eventually regarded by them as a kind of sage. They were struggling to preserve their freedom, and in his book Saint-Exupéry evokes the memory of one of his friends, el Mammun, who could not bear the degradation of being the vassal of white men. Honored and trusted by white officers, he revolted against them one day during an excursion into the desert, massacred them, and fled into free territory. This Moor suddenly realized that he was betraying his tribe, his religion, and his past as a famous warrior by submitting to Christians who encroached upon his people. Contact with this desert chieftain permitted Saint-Exupéry to develop one of the most important tenets of his code of ethics: all men seek a climate and terrain favorable to their self-fulfillment and one must acquire tolerance and sympathy for each man's particular truth.

In another part of the world, in Ar-

gentina, the plane took the narrator for a brief moment into the mysterious domain of the human soul. After landing in a field near Concordia, the pilot was taken into a strange house which, like a massive citadel, seems to want to keep all its secrets. The two girls who lived there assessed the stranger in order to determine whether he merited acceptance into the intimacy of their world. At dinner the aviator heard a noise under the table and was informed that snakes had made a nest there. The girls awaited his reaction. Fortunately he smiled and was admitted into the circle of these two young girls who, he notes in his narration, seemed to be mingled with something universal. Thus, the plane opens new horizons to its pilot in helping to raise the veil of mystery which surrounds people different from him and the affection which had been limited to his family and friends is broadened to include all men.

But the first step on the road to this humanism is the willingness to give of oneself. In the closing pages of *Wind, Sand and Stars* it is a Spanish soldier about to take part in a suicidal attack who is presented as another living incarnation of the quintessence of Saint-Exupéry's thought. This soldier who smiles on the eve of battle has consented to sacrifice his life for a goal situated completely outside his own selfish interests. He has given up a comfortable existence in Barcelona because he sensed intuitively that a struggle accepted in common with other men—the esprit de corps which impregnated the pilots of the airmail service—is a condition of inner liberation. The ideologies in conflict in the Spanish Civil War hold no interest for him; selfless action and duty inspire in this soldier a love infinitely more elevated and satisfying than he had ever known before.

THE WISDOM OF THE SANDS

Type of work: Philosophical observations and reflections

Author: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944)

First published: 1948

The Wisdom of the Sands, or *Citadelle*, as it was titled in French, was published posthumously, Saint-Exupéry having been shot down in 1944 while on a scouting mission in World War II. This book differs from his earlier ones, all of which had action and story line. *The Wisdom of the Sands* represents a kind of diary, not of what he did, but of what he thought. He kept the manuscript by him wherever he traveled, added to it daily, and apparently intended it to sum up his ideas on all the moral and spiritual questions confronting mankind. He particularly stresses the French military tradition of devotion to duty, discipline, and sacrifice for one's native soil. However, this book was not as well received as were his previous ones, perhaps because it is circuitious, repetitious, and without action or development of scene or character. The "I" is presumably the ruler of a desert empire, and the reader is included in his private musings on both the problems of state and his own personal problems. "I" recalls his father, who ruled before him and who was assassinated, and recounts some of his wise sayings and encounters with the people. The structure of the book is horizontal, a slight development being indicated by the speaker's frequent references to his father at the beginning and indications of increasing age toward the end.

Saint-Exupéry's choice of a ruler of an ancient desert empire to be his spokesman is apt, for it reflects his own decision to be a flyer, thus putting himself at a point where he could contemplate earth and man from a distance. Flying also brought him long periods of solitude similar to the loneliness of the ruler isolated by virtue of his position. It is also fitting for a king to speak as a religious

prophet, a dedicated mystic, and an authoritarian.

The king's concerns were two: to be a just and wise king and to be a wise, fulfilled human being. As a king, he felt himself to be all powerful and rightly so. Men individually count for nothing, but if they can be part of an empire they can then achieve significance. It is the significance of things that alone counts for men. Thus, building an empire is the creation of a heart; it brings men together, makes them brothers. If one wants men to hate one another, do not have them build but throw them corn. For the creation of an empire unites men and gives them a purpose larger than themselves. Going into battle is good, for it binds them closer, and dying for one's country brings the joy of self-sacrifice for a concept larger than oneself.

When the king, wandering alone through the city at night, comes upon a sleeping sentinel, he is touched by the young soldier's child-like innocence and meditates for some time as to whether or not he should be executed. He fully understands how youthful the sentinel is, how he may have stood faithfully awake for many watches, how overcome he may have been, and what his death would mean to his parents. But he concludes that a sleeping sentinel is the first step toward the disintegration of the empire. He believes that to explain to the sentinel how important a part he plays in the formation of the empire and what the empire means to all men will give him the willingness and nobility to face his execution like a man. As a king he has also learned not to pity the poor, the beggars, or the dying. As a youth he had tried to help them, only to learn that they grew bored with their improved conditions and

eventually returned gladly to their former state. As for the dying, they have an independence that no one can touch.

The king had a program for teaching the young. They should be taught no formulas, only visions. They should not be given dry bones of knowledge but a mode of thought that will enable them to grasp the Here and Now. Their talents if any, should not be assessed at an early age, but they should be made to work hard against the grain. They should be taught respect for their elders and for some concept greater than themselves, to pray, to meditate, and to love. All liars must be severely punished. One should not begin teaching forgiveness and charity because these lead to condoning injuries and developing ulcers.

The king encountered many paradoxes in his meditations. A major one is that he loves only that which resists; he hates complaisance. Thus he admires both the man who obeys him and faces death in battle and the man who defies him and is thrown into jail. He loves particularly a nearby, rival king, a man older than himself. Their armies fight every year, and every year the two kings meet for a parley in the middle of the desert. Their men withdraw and the two sit isolated and speak together. They are beloved enemies. When the ruler hears that the older king has died, he mourns and thereafter goes every year to the site of their meetings and sits alone, communing with the dead, his horsemen at a distance with orders to shoot dead anyone so rash as to enter the area. For the king, all men's smiles will be enriched by having known the dead king's smile; he will discern Man's countenance the better for having looked this one man straight in the eye. To know one sunset, one mountain, one rose, one woman is to know them all. One cannot weep over the death of many people but only over a specific person. The little fox, who also appears in Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, is an example that is referred to many times

throughout the book. In one instance, a soldier has captured a cub fox which he loves. When the fox finally runs away, the soldier weeps, but says he will not try to catch another one because he has not enough time to learn to love another pet. In actuality the fox has already taught him how to love all foxes.

Another paradox is that the enemy is really not an enemy, for he does you a service. By setting limits for you, or trying to, he shows you your true form. By the same token, evil is also good, for it forces you to oppose it. Also, paradoxically, the king establishes the empire so as to fulfill men and inspire them; the empire counts less than the man, but in order to establish real men the king subordinates each man to the empire. He is never to judge or act on his judgment, for unless a man's actions fit exactly into the policeman's rule book, anything he has done can be made to seem at least foolish if not criminal. The policeman only forbids certain acts without knowing why; if he were to set up a society, it would be base.

As an individual working out his own destiny, the king felt he should ignore the opinion of others. The only thing that mattered was his effort. Happiness was not to be thought of because it would not be an end but a reward. His greatest satisfaction would be to achieve permanence through enduring works and sons to take his place. Nor would he seek worldly goods. Wherever worldly goods are abundant, man has a much greater chance to deceive himself about what makes him happy; he may come to attribute happiness to those things when in reality it is due to the meaning behind them. True happiness is "becoming."

One must think in the Present. Establishing the present is but preparing for the future. One consolation the king found in growing old was the gift of peace and silence. He concluded that Man's "progress" consisted in the gradual discovery that his questions have no

meaning. Love means an end of questionings, and in silence all questions die away. He praises God and appeals to him for guidance constantly, but expects no answer. There is no vulgar commerce with God. If He answered, God would not be God. The king discovered in life but one freedom, that of the mind. As for equality, that comes within God alone; with men one has only brotherhood. The king often visited a carpenter whose skill he greatly admired. He would sit in his home and accept his food and admire his

work, but no one should ever consider them equals, for they were not. There must be a hierarchy, and every man of position must hand down his home and inheritance so that the empire will have dwellers, not campers, within its borders.

The book ends with a long prayer; but while it contains many such prayers, much description of the desert, sunsets, and stars, it is chiefly a political statement couched in terms of nature, beauty, justice, and eternity.

WISE BLOOD

Type of work: Novel

Author: Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

Time: The present

Locale: Taulkinham, a Southern city

First published: 1952

Principal characters:

HAZEL MOTES, aged twenty-two, a preacher

ENOCH EMERY, aged eighteen, a zoo attendant

ASA HAWKS, an itinerant blind preacher and beggar

SABBATH LILY HAWKS, his daughter

HOOVER SHOATS (also ONNIE JAY HOLY), a religious racketeer

MRS. FLOOD, Hazel's landlady in the city

MRS. LEORA WATTS, a prostitute

The directions for reading this novel are given in the short, dryly ironic note Flannery O'Connor prefaced to the second edition. Like the directions for getting places in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, they warn the reader that he must cope with the opposite to whatever he expects in fiction; what in life may appear tragic is here comical triumph—Hazel Motes's self-blinding—and the hero, like every character in the book, is a most unattractive person.

Where he is not laughable he is pitiable. The novel is thus a comic and wholly serious presentation of the painful inevitability of becoming a Christian in the absolute sense Flannery O'Connor intends, however much we are offended by the lack of humanity in the characters and their creator. Hazel achieves the integrity and hence the dignity of the hu-

man soul by giving up the struggle to escape redemption by Christ, and for most of the time that he wriggles on the hook of his destiny he looks undignified.

The novel is simply constructed of fourteen chapters, most of them episodes in Hazel Motes's unwilling quest for the true Jesus through an assortment of false prophets. The complexity of the novel comes from the novelist's intention. Flannery O'Connor is herself a prophet warning by lurid *exempla* of the wrath to come. Hazel Motes is surrounded by people who think they act reasonably, especially in allowing a comfortable religious feeling a small part of their existence; operators like Hoover Shoats and Mrs. Flood do not know that they are swine about to be deluged. They are in hell and do not know it, unlike the damned—Sabbath Lily Hawks—who do know it and do not care. Hazel thinks he has

shaken off any fooling about with the religion of his grandfather and mother and is thus clean of hypocrisy; he can sleep nights with a prostitute, Mrs. Leora Watts, and not imperil his soul. He learns better by the end of the novel, and it is, as it must be, an agonizing experience. He has to blind himself with quicklime before he can see clearly his redemption by Christ. The irony of the novel consists in showing that every step Hazel thinks will take him farther from Christ simply brings him closer to his Redeemer.

Such irony would be objectionable if it were possible to treat Hazel Motes as contemptible in his mad goings-on, or, remembering Christian charity, as deserving of sympathy, a welfare check, and a course of analysis. But Motes is eventually our superior in man's only proper business of holy living and holy dying, and a martyr for our edification. One also feels that Flannery O'Connor has martyred him in mortification of her own ego. This novel could stand as her New Testament to the necessity of forgetting self in the service of God, even to mutilation if that is necessary, just as her second novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, seems to recover for her the meaning of the Old Testament.

Hazel Motes is either repulsively or ludicrously grotesque from his first entrance in the train on his way to the city; he has just been discharged from Army service at the age of twenty-two and has kept himself clean all that time; he returns to Eastrod, Tennessee, only to find that dwindling hamlet vanished. Now he is free of his Christian past and proceeds to the city—where else?—to sin, which he accomplishes with Mrs. Watts. He buys a car as well and thus joins the gallery of Flannery O'Connor's characters for whom the city and the automobile are symbols of corruption. In the third chapter he meets the false prophets: Asa Hawks, who says he has blinded himself for his belief in redemption by Christ, and Enoch Emery, the young man of eighteen, country-bred like Hazel, who

lives by the "wise blood" he inherits from his daddy. Thereafter Hazel becomes more involved with both these prophets of a false way of life and has to shake himself free of each. It is not until four events happen that he is freed from the false trail he is following, summarized in the novel as the "Church of Christ without Christ" which he preaches before movie houses: he sees that Asa Hawks is not blind; he rejects the false god (a mummified man) that Enoch worships and Sabbath Lily Hawks adopts; he kills the image of himself that Hoover Shoats has hired to preach the false or imitation "Church of Christ without Christ"; and his car is deliberately wrecked by a policeman. The last two episodes probably repel us more than the fantastic doings of Enoch, Asa, and Lily. Someone, we feel, should bring the policeman to justice for smashing the boy's car, even if Hazel did not have a driver's license; at the same time someone should charge Hazel with murder.

But another justice is at work here, the swift and terrible speed of mercy. Hazel Motes has been mercifully delivered by God from his false prophets, and he proceeds to blind himself in accordance with the policeman's dictum that those who have no license need no car: those who have a "mote" in their eye must cast it out; they that have no eyes for the true God need no sight. Hazel spends his last days in the hands of Mrs. Flood, who is indirectly responsible for his murder by two casual policemen, until, having escaped her and life, he is at last composed in death. In the final paragraph of the novel Mrs. Flood glimpses the vision that his actions are governed by a secret which could be the light of her life. Her tentative achievement of this diminutive revelation could be the meaning of Hazel's life and death.

The possessor of the "wise blood," Enoch Emery, plays a subordinate but integral role in the novel; in the fifth, eighth and eleventh chapters his story is told independently and then related to

that of Hazel Motes. Although Flannery O'Connor began in the third chapter by letting Enoch tell his history to Hazel, in the later chapters she lets Enoch go his own way, guided by the "wise blood" which tells him that Hazel is important to him. This intuition is confirmed when Hazel seeks him out before he begins to preach "The Church of Christ without Christ," and Enoch shows Hazel the mummified man that fascinates him in the run-down museum attached to the zoo, which places are symbolic of man's animal nature and dead past.

When Enoch hears Hazel preaching, he determines to steal the mummified man and give the figure to Hazel as his new "Christ"; but after doing so his "wise blood" takes charge again and leads him to seize the gorilla suit of a fake "gorilla" movie star, Gongga, and try to make friends in this rig-out. The whole of the twelfth chapter is devoted to this episode which leaves "Gongga" Emery alone and puzzled on the highway: it contains some of the most comic writing in Flannery O'Connor, partly verbal, partly comedy of situation, and at the same time profoundly meaningful. This is man as man alone, a "bare, forked animal" thinking he can be a success in life by following his "wise blood." Enoch is thus a more direct contrast to Hazel than Asa Hawks or Hoover Shoats ("Onnie Jay Holy"), who simply use religion to make money and thus confirm Hazel's disgust with institutional or evangelical Christianity. Theirs is a false way to salvation, but Enoch's is equally profitless in his determination to get on in the world at all costs, and his is the more prevalent code.

The many minor characters are not all condemned by Flannery O'Connor, as is shown by their treatment of Hazel Motes. Those who cheat him—the car

salesman, the hat salesman, Mrs. Flood—are clearly vicious, though the way they gull poor simple Hazel is richly comic. But on at least three occasions someone tries to tell Hazel the truth about his Essex car and he will not listen, leading to its destruction at the hands of the policeman. Swift sketches of the physical appearance and nature of the minor characters, such as the woman at the swimming pool, reveal Flannery O'Connor's remarkable gift for caricature.

Striking similes and other tricks of style—elliptical country speech, in which so much is left unsaid, the rapid succession of events in the narrative—carry the story along at a fast pace. The narrative is brief and the meaning clear. Granted the initial stance of high irony in which everything is at once itself and its opposite, there is no difficulty in seeing that Hazel Motes and Flannery O'Connor are preaching "The Church of Christ With Christ."

The writer's gifts amply insure our reading the story and seeing its meaning. But there remains a final hesitation for those readers whose Christ is a tender and loving spirit. When Hazel's mother reminds him that Christ died to redeem him from sin, he replies that he did not ask Christ to do that. There is no freedom for the individual in this novel because, as Flannery O'Connor suggests in her introductory note, man's free will is simply a conflict of many wills or desires in man; this conflict is resolved only when a man abandons his desires and accedes to the will of God and allows it to be imposed on him. This is the "jealous" God of the Old Testament who in the New Testament sent his Son to be crucified for us. We must expect to be equally crucified in our turn, as Hazel Motes is in this novel.

WOMEN IN LOVE

Type of work: Novel

Author: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

Time: Early twentieth century

Locale: The English Midlands, London, the Austrian Alps
First published: 1920

Principal characters:

GUDRUN BRANGWEN, a sophisticated art student
URSULA BRANGWEN, her sister, a schoolteacher
GERALD CRICH, a young mine director, Gudrun's suitor
RUPERT BIRKIN, a school inspector, later Ursula's husband
HERMIONE RODDICE, a friend of the Criches
WINIFRED CRICH, Gerald's younger sister
THOMAS CRICH, their father
WILL BRANGWEN, father of Gudrun and Ursula
HERR LOERKE, a German sculptor

Lawrence himself often said that *Women in Love* was his best novel. Critics have not been too sure, though they have called it a unique book. Puzzled by the tangle of relationships among the two sisters and the two young men of the story, they have described the novel as inchoate and frenetic. Lawrence himself, in his short foreword, used the word "struggle" six times, referring first to his own strenuous effort at trying to understand himself and second to his search for the right words to express his struggles. He set forth the theme of *Women in Love* in this manner: The impulses of yearning and aspiration from the free, creative soul are our proper destiny and our business is to fulfill them, for any fate determined by external circumstances is false.

Lawrence's four major characters are in various degrees acutely aware of their inner promptings. The book is a succession of conflicts; there is little conventional "plot" as Lawrence shows how the inner "promptings" of one person clash with those of another. The incredible difficulty of establishing viable human relationships is thus the problem with which he deals. His characters frequently experience "electric" attractions toward one another, but more stable relationships are achieved only slowly and awkwardly. Rupert Birkin, a school inspector, pursues something higher than either physical or spiritual love: his own self-identity. Ursula Brangwen, the young teacher to whom he is attracted, cannot understand this metaphysical yearning. Her prompt-

ings are sexual and ultimately marital. Yet in the end their conflicting promptings finally mesh; Rupert is able to become more selfless and Ursula is able to endure his metaphysical drive toward self-awareness. In contrast to Rupert and Ursula are Gerald Crich and Gudrun Brangwen, whose apparently smooth relationship roughens and ends with a climactic argument and Gerald's death.

Women in Love is both a good and a bad title for the book. The focus is on the two women, Gudrun and Ursula Brangwen, both in their mid-twenties, daughters of a handicrafts instructor in the coal district town of Beldover. They have rather more importunate and erotic inner promptings than the young men have. The novel in a sense deals with their pursuit of the men, who do not quite know what they want. Yet the title may be misleading, for Lawrence has several concerns apart from those of the two young women and their erotic impulses. Other relationships provide a focus now and then, giving Lawrence a chance to relax the desperate intensity with which he entangles his four major characters. Against a backdrop of the coal-mining region of England, he presents young Gerald Crich as a contrast to his father. Gerald, about thirty years old, brings in new machines and efficient personnel to turn the family mine into a profitable business once more. Old Crich has been running it largely for the sake of his workers. Lawrence's concern with family relationships is also evident in another clash between the new and old

generations. The Brangwen girls, self-conscious sophisticates, find themselves in frequent opposition to their parents, rigid middle-class moralists presented almost to the point of caricature. These domestic difficulties counterpoint the major theme of individuals and their conflicting promptings. There is also a latent relationship between Rupert and Gerald. Lawrence, in fact, closes the novel on this note. After Gerald's death Ursula asks her husband whether he had needed the dead man. Rupert replies that he did. Ursula then declares that one cannot have two kinds of love. In her insistence she fails to comprehend his notion of an ideal male "Blutbruderschaft" which should complement marriage. This final conversation is Lawrence's way of showing that conflicting promptings in two individuals can never really mesh in complete union. Though successfully married, neither Rupert nor Ursula can yield fully to the other's desires.

Written, says Lawrence, in 1913 and rewritten in 1917, the novel is exasperatingly naïve in style and point of view when judged by modern taste. Lawrence is an omniscient narrator, shifting three or four times from one character's thoughts to those of another in as many pages. He frequently intrudes to summarize a character's state of mind by means of generalizations which too often are either redundant or utterly unprepared for, as when he states that Gudrun's nature was restless beneath her seeming calm. Lawrence overindulges his penchant for focusing on discussion instead of action, but only early in the novel is this habit annoying. It is not an error to classify the book as a novel of ideas. Lawrence's high seriousness and his sometimes desperate search for language provide ludicrous passages here and there in the book. There is very little humor, and most of it is unintentional.

Lawrence called his novel "a potential sequel" to his earlier novel *The Rainbow*. Rupert Birkin is Lawrence himself, and Ursula is his wife Frieda. We are told

that Gudrun is to represent the short story writer Katherine Mansfield, while Gerald is J. Middleton Murry, the author who at the time was Lawrence's closest friend.

As if to underscore Lawrence's title and his preoccupation, the novel opens with the two sisters in conversation about marriage. In the first speech of the book Gudrun asks her sister whether she really wants to get married. As if to emphasize the inner complexity which will operate throughout *Women in Love*, Ursula replies vaguely that she does not know. Her true answer must depend on Gudrun's meaning.

With this exchange as a keynote Lawrence leads clumsily into his action. He takes Gudrun and Ursula on a walk past a neighboring church where a wedding is taking place. In the procession is Gerald Crich, whose flesh, beauty, and male quality take possession of Gudrun's imagination, and she tells herself that she must know more about him. Rupert Birkin, the school inspector, is also in the wedding. Ursula, as a teacher, has spoken with him before, but now she realizes that she wishes to know him better.

In the subsequent chapters Lawrence gradually expands and complicates the relationships of his characters. Ursula receives a visit at school from Rupert and his friend, Hermione Roddice. Rupert and Gerald talk during a train journey to London and spend a bohemian weekend together. Hermione is the catalyst who throws all four, Ursula, Gudrun, Rupert, and Gerald, together for the first time. The setting is her Derbyshire estate where, under a surface of banter and leisure, we see the inner promptings of the guests working ominously.

As time passes, further encounters take place among the four, allowing for tentative relationships to begin. With almost religious fervor Gerald begins to modernize the family coal mine. Gudrun comes to work as a governess to Gerald's sister. Rupert, in ill health, disappears into the

south of France. On his return he tries again to explain to Ursula his notion of wanting to remain an individual while yet uniting in the communion of marriage. Ursula dislikes these peculiar terms and refuses his proposal. In a violent argument some time later Rupert sees his "spiritual" notions as self-destructive and yields to Ursula's erotic promptings.

Old Mr. Crich's death causes Gerald to turn to Gudrun for support. With the mine running smoothly and with his invalid father buried, Gerald has time to contemplate his own empty life and sense of nothingness. He impulsively goes to Gudrun's house, sneaking past her parents into her third-floor bedroom. There he spends the night.

To her parents' disgust, Ursula announces her engagement to Rupert. Gerald contemplates marrying Gudrun.

The two couples decide to spend Christmas on the Continent. In Austria Gudrun is pursued by Loerke, a sculptor. She gradually realizes that life is full of experiences she has not tasted, and she tells Gerald that their relationship is over. The next day, in fury, he nearly chokes her to death, then stumbles off into the snow where he is found dead.

In Lawrence's terms, Gerald's self-destruction is the logical symbolic event to conclude the book. Throughout the novel Gerald has been a destructive force. He had killed his brother when a boy. Then, in modernizing the mines, he had substituted mechanical principles for organic ones, thus creating a destructive, inhuman, joyless industry. Gudrun and Ursula had once observed him cruelly

forcing his frightened horse to stand beside a passing train. The Crich family itself, the largest mine-owners of the district, exudes decay. In the novel three people die; all are Criches.

For Lawrence, the intended contrast is Rupert Birkin. Though a sickly, introspective, insignificant school inspector, Rupert becomes aware, just in time, of his own pleasure in the idea and act of self-destruction. He cleanses himself of this negative impulse by yielding to Ursula's erotic desires, yet he refuses to yield all of himself to her. Gerald, on the other hand, lacks self-awareness. He comes to Gudrun desperately, trying to discard his total self (the ultimate act of self-destruction), seeking her as a mother, not as a lover. The last of his mind's cries, as he wanders in the symbolic deep snow of winter, is his desperate desire to go to sleep.

Part of Lawrence's irony lies in the fact that the two defeated characters in the novel are those described as possessing great will. Gerald imposes his almost superhuman will in mechanizing the mines. Hermione Roddice, who has claims on Rupert as the novel opens, drops out of sight; the more Lawrence emphasizes her power of will, the faster her influence declines. The point is no paradox. It is Lawrence constantly returning to his thesis that the freely creative and spontaneous soul is the source of health and freedom, not the will of a Hermione or a Gerald, or the abstruse intellection of a Rupert. All comes back to the spontaneous promptings, the mysterious and essentially erotic drives of "women in love."

THE ZINCALI

Type of work: Anthropology

Author: George Henry Borrow (1803-1881)

First published: 1841

George Borrow's name is associated with the gypsies because four of his books deal with them; he spent a part of his life with them and wherever he traveled he

always seemed to get into conversation with them. His passport was his knowledge of Romany which Borrow, sniffing at people who wrote books on the gypsy

and who did not know the language, calls "the grand criterion." *The Zincali* shows Borrow's delight, as in all his writing, in catching the gipsies out when they talk about him in their language, and his enjoyment in talking with them, even the "degraded and unhappy" gipsies of Spain; his book about them contains several of their stories, together with accounts of his adventures among them. His excuse for spending two afternoons a week with the gipsy women in Madrid in 1837 and 1838 was the hope that his Romany translation of the Gospel of St. Luke would convert some of them. At the same time he was realistic about his prospects of converting a race he summarized as "a set of Thugs, subsisting by cheating and villainy of every description; hating the rest of the human species, and bound to each other by the bonds of common origin, language, and pursuits."

The Zincali, was one of four books Borrow worked on while acting as agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society in Spain during most of the years between 1836 and 1840. In 1838 he published at Madrid translations of St. Luke in Romany and Basque, and he sold most of the five hundred copies of the former; he also wrote the reports for the society which became the basis of *The Bible in Spain* and drafted the chapters which he later assembled as *The Zincali*, his first original work. It shows in its clumsy organization, repetition, and fragmentary and disparate chapters some of the effects of being written at intervals and by a novice; but Borrow made some attempt to put down what he thought were the most important facts about the gipsies, chiefly in his preface, which points he then illustrated in describing the past and present state of the *gitáños*, or gipsies of Spain.

The introduction summarizes Borrow's knowledge of the gipsies of Russia, Hungary, Rumania, and England, and makes the following general statement: The race is very old, is scattered throughout Europe, and everywhere exhibits com-

mon racial features, a common language (with dialects), and a common way of life. These common elements have been preserved in the face of wandering and persecution by fierce loyalty to their race as a whole, not to the national variations of it, and by their equally fierce hatred of whatever people they lived among; their loyalty is summed up in the gipsy law: always to live with, be loyal to, and pay one's debt's to the gipsy. They are filthy, illiterate, irreligious, never follow agriculture, and have no hereditary leaders; they have more ability than other races in herbs, horses, metals, music, theft, murder, and fortune-telling; they never get drunk, commit adultery or prostitution, or fail to pay their debts. Borrow finds a certain amount to admire in this catalogue, especially when he compares them to the Spaniards, but he frankly condemns their way of life: they can exist only on the suffering of others.

These points are made in the scattered episodes of the book, often in the equally frank statements of the gipsies. The main sections are Parts One and Two; Part Three consists of two chapters demonstrating, with examples, genuine and spurious gipsy poetry, and an appendix tracing the Romany language to Sanskrit and pointing out the connection of thieves' language of each European country with Romany and hence Sanskrit. These two appendices, together with that on the English gipsy dialect, are illustrated by comparative tables which will interest the linguist, as will the vocabulary. For Part Three one really needs to consult Borrow's *Romano-Lavo-Lil* or "Word-Book of the Romany," published in 1874. Only two points need be made about the language: first, the gipsies of Spain, like gipsies elsewhere, were bilingual, speaking Spanish fluently and their own international tongue. Second, Borrow uses two words to describe the gipsies—"Chal" and "Rom," which latter he defines as "the husbands"; the false attribution of Egyptian origin to the gipsies, encouraged by them, gives us the English

"gipsy" and Spanish "*gitano*"; the Spanish gipsies call themselves the "Zincali" and all foreigners "Busne."

On the whole Borrow attempted to keep his general remarks about the Zincali to Part One, the twelve chapters of which cover four main topics. Borrow first describes the main location of the Zincali in the province of Andalusia, their organization in roving bands led by "Counts" and in families, and their ghettos or "*gitaniera*" in the principal cities. He next dismisses the notion that they are cannibals (although on occasion they may have been), affirms that they do exist as a special tribe in Barbary, and discounts as superstition their power of "the evil eye." His third topic is an interesting comparison with the Jews and Moors, with both of which, he says, they have been falsely related, and he points out that the continued existence of the pagan Zincali in Christian Spain is due to their usefulness to the nobility and the lack of interest shown in them by the Inquisition; the Holy Office, he argues, was in Spain a device to gratify, under the cloak of religious fervor, the prime Spanish vices of avarice and envy, so that the Jews and Moors, much more civilized than the Spaniards, suffered accordingly by being expelled or burnt in equally large numbers.

Here and elsewhere Borrow recounts the first arrival of the gipsies in eastern Europe in the twelfth century. Posing as penitents from Egypt condemned to wander the earth for a certain time, they gained for themselves letters of passage from Pope and Emperor and relatively easy pickings from gullible Christians. Borrow's last topic is illustrated by long quotations from Spanish authorities to describe the ineffectual attempts legally to suppress the gipsies in a lawless land. He concludes Part One with an account of the more realistic and merciful decree of Charles III in 1783 which, as he shows in conversation with two gipsies in the third chapter of Part Two, was largely responsible for their decline in

numbers and prosperity; since the way had been opened for assimilation of gipsies into Spanish life and institutions their numbers declined from sixty thousand in 1800 to about forty thousand when Borrow was in Spain. Part One is illustrated with a number of dramatic passages, chiefly the account of a bookseller who tried to renounce his gipsy origins and perished in defending the Busne from the Zincali, and an exhibition of a *gitana* gulling Spanish ladies.

Part Two, is in some ways the more interesting, contains several general matters that one feels belong in Part One—for example, Chapter VI, which describes the three principal crimes of the Zincali: "Bahi" or fortunetelling (two of Borrow's *gitana* acquaintances boasted to him of having told the fortune of Queen Christina of Spain); false pretenses and theft; and the use of "drao," or deadly herbs to infect or kill man and beast. Part Two begins with Borrow's arrival in Spain and meeting the Zincali first in the frontier town of Badajoz, where he found they were so degraded as not to know the story of their race and culture as well as he did. Apart from chapters of extracts from authorities and some survey of the Zincali in the cities of Spain—the most exciting scene is the smashing of a ton of confectionery at a gipsy wedding—most of this section is taken up with the doings of the female gipsies whom Borrow preferred for intelligence to the men. The "heroine" of this part is the incredible hag who ran an inn in Tarifa and whose family intrigued Borrow as being innkeepers and the only gipsies in that area.

He tells two interesting anecdotes connected with his work of bringing the Gospel to Spain and to the Zincali. In the first he describes how he persuaded the Zincali of Cordova to play a party game by translating the Apostles' Creed into Romany, which he appends to the volume as a philological curiosity. In the second he invited the circle of *gitanas* he drew around him in Madrid to translate the Gospel of Saint Luke. They gave up

after the eighth chapter, but Borrow imagined that on their deathbeds their deed might come in useful to them. The Zincali, like other gypsies, had no use for religion except for the baptismal certificates they prized (possibly in order to be buried); of their own religion Borrow could find only a superstitious faith in what he calls the "loadstone," which the Zincali credited with great powers. He found this belief all the more remarkable because they used the superstitions of the Spaniards for their own purposes and had little such fear themselves.

It is difficult to decide the merits of Borrow's account of the Zincali without knowing the people concerned, but part of the difficulty is Borrow's aggressive

stance in the foreground of his anecdotes and arguments. Much of the book, in very Spanish fashion, tilts at windmills—mistaken ideas about the gypsies. The writing is generally flat; for example, he concludes his examination of the possibility of cannibalism among the Zincali thus: "after the above anecdotes, it will perhaps not be amiss to devote a few lines to the subject of gypsy food and diet." Borrow's special gift for blunt dialogue or vivid rhetoric in dramatic scenes is only occasionally glimpsed, suggesting that he was gradually finding the style he would develop in his next and more interesting book, *The Bible in Spain*, and use best in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*.

ZORBA THE GREEK

Type of work: Novel

Author: Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957)

Time: The present

Locale: Crete

First published: 1952

Principal characters:

ZORBA, a Greek miner, a man of great physical vigor and lusty appetites

THE NARRATOR, called "Boss," Zorba's employer and friend

MADAME HORTENSE, an aging courtesan

THE VILLAGE WIDOW

STAVRIDAKI, the Narrator's close friend

The story of *Zorba the Greek* is that of life against death. The central figure is Zorba, a miner of about sixty, who refuses to let age and approaching death keep him from the celebration of being alive. Zorba is employed by a man who is an intellectual in spite of himself, a man bound to the contemplation of books and landscapes, and cut off from the traditional snares of wine, women, and song. *Zorba the Greek* is about the conversion of this man; it is the story of the passion for life raised by the old man in the spirit of the younger.

These are the circumstances of the narrative: the Narrator, whose entire life has been bound up with the rather sterile worship of ideas, decides to go into business on the island of Crete. To this pur-

pose he rents a strip of land, assembles equipment, and forms a mining company. To supervise the miners he brings with him Zorba, a man of immense physical presence and corresponding physical appetites. The Narrator is reserved, intellectual, introspective; Zorba is barbarous and noisy, a lover of wine and chaser of women. Their encounters and misadventures on the island of Crete are the substance of this book.

Upon their arrival on Crete the two find an aging woman cast ashore by whatever fates determine the careers of broken-down courtesans. She is a woman who has known a great deal of pleasure, even something of love. In her youth she has been the mistress of admirals and princes, and a good many others besides.

She is about to invest her old age in the repentant contemplation of her past when Zorba arrives to bring her back to life. He proves that there is a good deal of life left in both of them, even though they are at the end of their colorful spans. Zorba and Madame Hortense set up a *ménage à deux*, and the Narrator, to whose age such attachments are more natural, becomes the amused witness of their late passion.

As for the Narrator himself, he is deeply stirred, but not by love. The idea of love has the power to move him, as does the sight of birds, the memory of lines of Dante, the thought of his platonic attachment to a departed friend. But he shrinks from real, physical attachment; it is only with an effort that he even brings himself to understand why Zorba delights in eating and drinking too much. He sings the praises of Dante on the island of Crete, surely a case of doing the right thing at the wrong time. For the island of Crete is a fertile island, and its ancient history and mythology lose nothing in the symbolic relation of Kazantzakis. The island is a place where vines grow in abundance. Wine flows easily; it is likened to blood, and its drinking to a feast of cannibals. The island is a place of olives and grain, growing lushly out of the earth under hot Libyan winds. And it is pre-eminently a place of passion, whose rulers are the young women of its countryside. All of these the Narrator tries desperately to avoid, until he undergoes a ceremonial baptism in all of them.

He is first awakened to life by the musings of Madame Hortense, who reveals in her immoral but fascinating stories the motives that make men both sinful and magnificent. Her rhapsodies over her past lovers seem at first merely amusing—she goes on forever over their curly, silky, dark, perfumed beards—until the Narrator becomes aware of the power of life behind her experiences. He realizes that what has kept her alive, indeed what has redeemed the nature of her life, is her capacity to take the deepest pleasure

from the memory of love. And he sees this same capacity operating in Zorba, who refuses to let his age stand between him and life. It is the great failing of Zorba, and perhaps his strength, as he admits, that the older he grows the less he is able to control his desires.

Gradually the story of Zorba's life comes out. He has been married, and he has been free. He has been at times a father and a lover, a man of property and a beggar. Yet he is perhaps by definition a man who is completely free. When he likes something he stays with it; when he grows tired he moves on to some other experience. He does so not out of a decadent sense of pleasure but because he is convinced that this is the way of all living things. Zorba, in short, is an animal, and he is astute enough to recognize this fact, and not to wish he were something else. He lives without ordinary morals because that is his nature. Gradually, the Narrator comes to realize that this simple and primitive existence holds the key to a real truth, for whenever he attempts to argue with Zorba, the issue is reduced to realities, and he loses. Hunger, Zorba shows him, can only be appeased by eating, even if the food belongs to someone else. Women, Zorba explains, can only be understood by their use and their desires, even if they are married to someone else. The cardinal sin, in fact, is to disappoint a woman who is ready for love, for this denies the whole purpose of her creation.

This theology may be too primitive for the mainland, but it is appropriate to Crete. The gods have abandoned Crete, and their representatives, the monks in the monastery nearby, encourage no faith in their beliefs. When the Narrator approaches them to confront the earthiness of Zorba with disinterested wisdom, he finds that they too have their fierce appetites, their depravities, and their moral ugliness. Zorba, he begins to see, is perhaps more true to the forces that really rule this savage island. They are the forces of fertility—and Zorba is one of

the last of the Greek demigods of nature. He is a passionate dancer and player on the stringed *santuri*, and when he finds language inexpressive, which is often, he simply leaps to his feet and dances until he reaches a state of frenzy and exhaustion. In all of his excesses he is like some natural force. Kazantzakis evidently is comparing him to magnificent nature gods of Greek mythology. That he is old and near death is significant, for the author intimates that he is the last of such men.

In this long and lyrical book there is not a great deal of action to accompany the reflections of the Narrator. What there is, however, makes up in intensity what it lacks in volume. The Narrator finally succumbs to the nature-worship of Zorba and, however reluctantly, arrives at the bed of the woman for whom he is destined. Crete, however, is not the kind of place to let matters end in so rational a way. In a terrible scene ushered in by a celebration and dancing, she is cornered by an angry mob of jealous women. They incite their men to attack her. In the presence of Zorba and his friend she is pinioned in a re-enactment of some ancient sacrifice and beheaded. With a special irony her head is thrown onto the steps of the church.

It is the advent of death that brings another kind of enlightenment to the Narrator. He realizes that he is in the midst of a kind of life that is nowhere described in books, not even in Dante. He has accepted the orgiastic celebration of life, and now this ritual murder brings him to understand the onmipresence of death. It is this which completes his vision of things. Yet *Zorba the Greek* does not end here, for it is in the nature of Zorba scarcely to end at all. He leaves the island and, as the Narrator later hears, travels through the countries of the Balkans, leaving behind him a decided swath of empty bottles and rejoicing women. Finally, in his seventies, he marries a magnificent young Serbian woman, fathers her child, and dies even while protesting his sickness.

Throughout *Zorba the Greek*, Kazantzakis concentrates on the language of abundance. He describes the things of the earth—wine, oil, the bodies of beautiful women—with a passion and with an accuracy that is all too often lacking in the denatured realism of the present. He deals with ideas, but only as they become concrete and specific in action. His accomplishment is to have made *Zorba the Greek* a fitting structure for the symbolic weight it carries.

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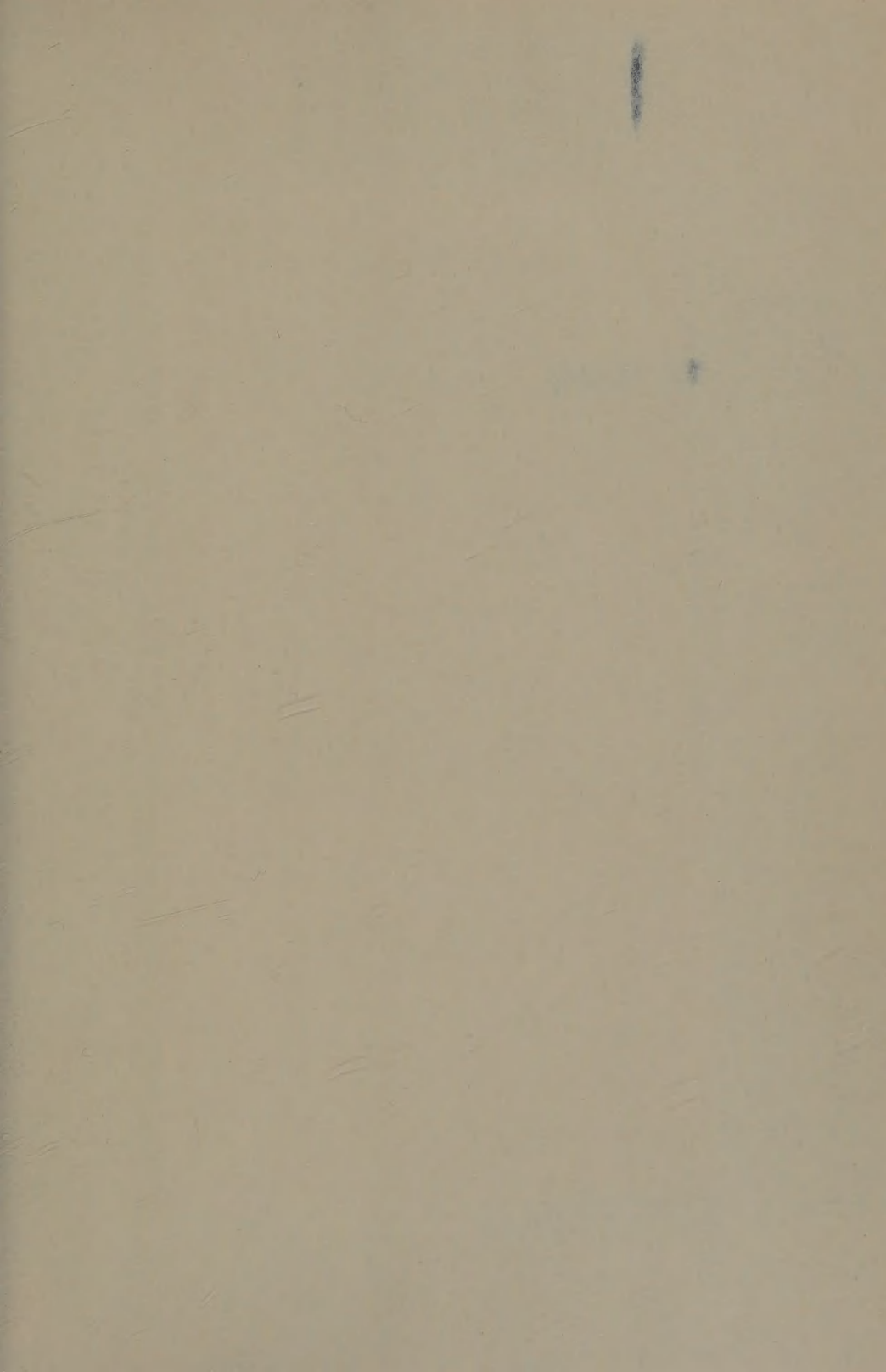
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